

# **WILL WE ALL GET ALONG?**

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## **Changing the Face of America**

**LEON F. BOUVIER**

**The Social  
Contract Press**

*Petoskey, MI*

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# **DEDICATION**

This book is dedicated to three wonderful women who have had a tremendous influence on my life. Terri was my beloved spouse for 54 years. She was always there when I needed her. Thank you, Terri, I really miss you terribly. Lynne and Linda are our daughters. They too have been and continue to be my staunchest “fans.” They have given me the moral support I urgently needed over the past few years. Thank you all—three wonderful women.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This brief monograph is intended as a demographic preview of what the United States will look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. When we eventually approach the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, how many Americans will there be? Will they be “older” than at present? Will we, as a nation, be more variegated than we are at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? These basic questions are discussed in the following chapters. But first, let us see how we got where we are today—just entering the year 2000.

About one hundred years ago, Americans were getting ready for the turn of the 20th. Soon 1899 would fade into memory and it would be 1900. On July 1 of that momentous year, we numbered some 76 million inhabitants. We are now celebrating an even more momentous occasion—the new millennium—and the Census Bureau estimates our population will be approximately 275 million by mid-year 2000 (see Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1). That is 3½ times larger than it was in 1900. It also represents the greatest increase of any developed nation in the world. In 1950, the United States population totaled 151 million. Thus, we doubled our numbers in the first half of the 20th century, and came close to doubling them again in the second half.

Will we keep on doubling our population every fifty years in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Hopefully not! Such doubling would result in 1.1 *billion* Americans ready to celebrate (if they have sufficient room) 2100! While this could happen, it remains highly improbable. In chapter 2, popula-

**Table 1.1 Total U.S. Population, 1900–2000**

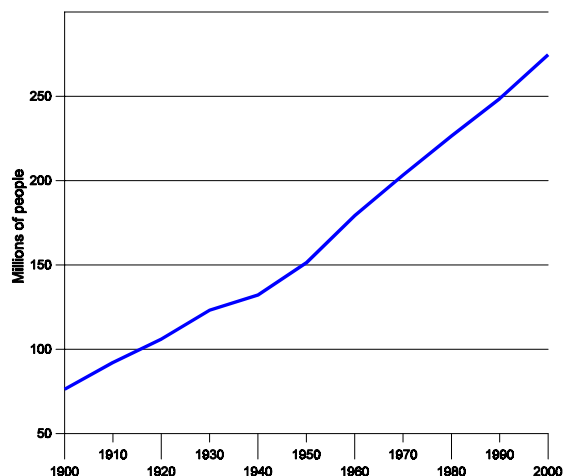
Year	Total
1900	76,212,168
1910	92,228,496
1920	106,021,537
1930	123,202,624
1940	132,164,569
1950	151,325,798
1960	179,323,175
1970	203,302,031
1980	226,542,203
1990	248,709,873
2000	274,634,000*

\* Middle projection for 2000.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, various dates.

tion growth will be discussed in detail and reasonable projections will be developed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Population size, whether increasing or decreasing, is not the only matter that concerns demographers and, more importantly, policy makers as well as all citizens. With shifts in any of the three basic demographic variables—fertility, migration, and mortality—the age composition of the nation can change drastically and sometimes, very rapidly (see Table 1.2 and Figure 1.2). Two ways to measure a nation’s age are:



**Figure 1.1 Total U.S. Population, 1900–2000**

**Table 1.2 Median Age and Number of Persons 65 and Over, U.S. 1900–2000**

Year	Median Age	65 and Over	
		%	Number (000s)
1900	22.9	4.1	3,080
1910	24.1	4.3	3,950
1920	25.3	4.7	4,933
1930	26.5	5.4	6,634
1940	29.0	6.8	9,050
1950	30.2	8.2	12,257
1960	29.5	9.2	16,675
1970	28.0	9.8	20,107
1980	30.0	11.3	25,549
1990	32.8	12.5	31,235
2000	35.7	12.6	34,709

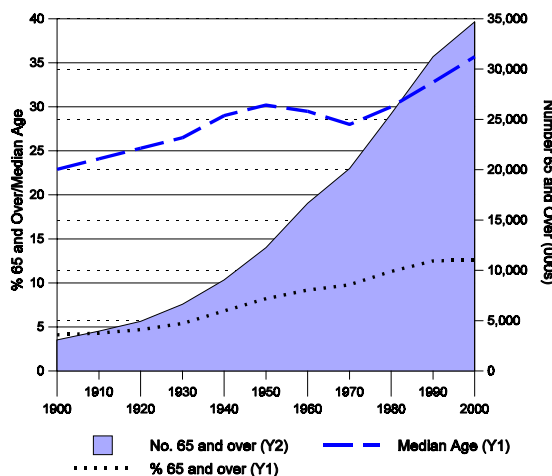
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, various dates.

- 1) *median age* (that is, the point where half the population is younger than the median and half is older), and
- 2) the *percentage distribution by various age groups* (e.g., the percent aged 65 and over).

Throughout this century, with the exception of part of the “baby boom” period, the nation “aged.” The median age was 22.9 in 1900 and rose to 25.3 by 1920. It remained around 25 for a few decades. With the baby boomers approaching middle age, the median age in year 2000 is about 36. Similarly, the proportion 65 and over increased throughout the century. In 1900 only 4 percent of the population was elderly. By 1950, that share had doubled to 8.2 percent. In 2000 it is more than 12.6 percent. We, as a nation, are getting older. Will that trend continue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What will happen when the baby boomers (i.e., those born between 1947 and 1964) become “senior boomers?” Most important, what will these shifts in age composition mean for the nation? Chapter 3 will

concentrate on the very important change that will occur in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Another significant factor to consider is the changing racial composition of the nation.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, dramatic shifts in this category were noted, as shown in Table 1.3 and Figure 1.3 below. In 1900, 87.9 percent of the inhabitants of the United States were White; 12.1 percent were non-White. Blacks made up 11.6 percent and “Others” 0.5 percent of the total population, and Hispanics were not counted separately. Little had changed by 1950. Whites comprised 89.4 percent of the population, non-Whites 10.6 percent (with 10.0 percent Black and 0.6 percent “Other”). All this changed dramatically after 1950, in large part due to increased levels of immigration.<sup>2</sup> In 2000, the Census Bureau estimates that the shares are distributed as follows: 71.8 percent White, 12.2 percent Black, 11.4 percent Hispanic, 3.9 percent Asian and Pacific Islander, and 0.7 percent American Indian. In just fifty years, the majority population’s share has fallen from almost 90 percent to under 72 percent. California is already a “no-majority” state in that no single racial category (as defined in note 1) comprises a majority of its population. What will happen to the



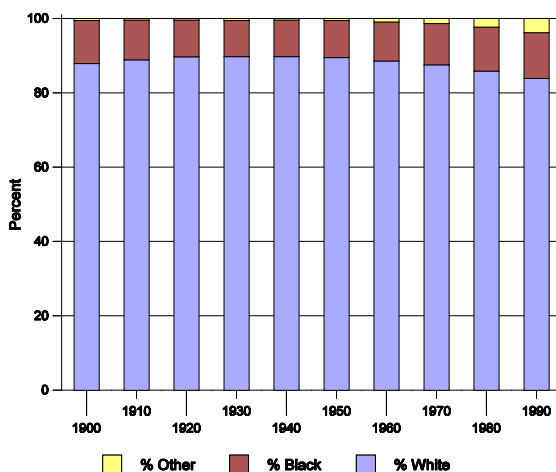
**Figure 1.2 Median Age, Number, and % of Persons 65 and Over, 1900–2000**



nation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially if immigration remains at current levels? Chapter 4 discusses this trend in some detail.

Chapter 5 looks at how aging and heterogeneity together will produce more dramatic challenges for society. Not only is the elderly sector growing at a fast pace, its racial characteristics also differ from its younger counterparts. This difference will be exacerbated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One question that will be addressed in chapter 5 is: Will a larger elderly and overwhelmingly White population support increased educational expenses for a much more mixed younger population? And the opposite question could be asked: Will a young and heterogeneous younger section of the population support retirement programs and provide care for a predominantly White elderly group?

Chapter 6 addresses the question in this book's title: "Will we all get along?" This important question—which paraphrases Rodney King's haunting query ("Why can't we get along?") about the Los Angeles riots that followed the exoneration of his police attackers in Los Angeles—will torment Americans of all backgrounds in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Indeed, already it is an issue in many parts of the country, from Southern California to Texas to south Florida, and in



**Figure 1.3 Racial/Ethnic Characteristics of the U.S., 1900–1990**

**Table 1.3 Racial/Ethnic Characteristics of the U.S. 1900–1990**

Year	% White	% Black	% Other	% Hispanic*
1900	87.9	11.6	0.5	NA
1910	88.9	10.7	0.4	NA
1920	89.7	9.9	0.4	NA
1930	89.8	9.7	0.5	NA
1940	89.8	9.8	0.4	NA
1950	89.5	10.0	0.5	NA
1960	88.6	10.5	0.9	NA
1970	87.6	11.1	1.3	NA
1980*	85.9	11.8	2.3	6.4
1990*	83.9	12.3	3.8	9.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, various dates.

\* Hispanics can be of any race and were not counted separately prior to 1980. In this table they are included under the other races through 1970. In 1990, the proportion Non-Hispanic White was 75.6 percent since the cited 83.9 percent includes those Hispanics who are White.

many of our larger cities—from New York to Chicago to Los Angeles. It raises the issue of what sociologists call "cultural adaptation." If, as is likely, the entire nation follows the demographic pattern set by California, how will citizens, especially those accustomed to being the majority, react? Will African Americans accept the fact that they will no longer be the nation's largest minority? A new kind of cultural adaptation process will be necessary if the nation is to avoid disunity.

In chapter 7, alternative demographic patterns will be suggested that, if followed, would result in slower growth and less heterogeneity than anticipated. I hope that this short book tells the story of what changes variations in demographic behavior can bring to a nation. Together, all of us (present day Americans and future immigrants to this country)

are what I call “population actors.” We are born as a result of the population acts of our parents. We move or we don’t move and we do so once, twice etc. Finally, all of us die, but at different ages depending to a considerable extent on our age group, sex, and racial characteristics. These various population acts will determine the age and race composition as well as the size of the United States in the next century.

## Projections, not Predictions

One caveat should be made with regard to population projections. These projections are often misinterpreted by the media, and on occasion, by demographers as well. *Projections* are not to be confused with *predictions*. In the following chapters I will be relying, for the most part, on U.S. Census Bureau projections as well as some that I have developed to complement those of the bureau. No one (at the Census Bureau and certainly not this author) is *predicting* that these numbers will actually occur. We are simply indicating what are assumed to be the three basic variables—fertility rates, life expectancy rates, and level of net immigration—and calculating projections *based on these stated demographic variable rates*. Thus, in actuality, projections can never be incorrect (assuming the mathematics are right). The estimates for fertility, mortality, and/or net immigration can be, and sometimes are, wrong.

Additionally, the longer the time frame of the projection, the less reliable it is. Consequently, I will concentrate on the first fifty years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The next period (2050–2100) will be discussed briefly, bearing in mind that I am far less confident of the second fifty years than I am of the first.

**“ . . . what will be the total population size and age and racial composition of the nation in 2050 or 2100?”**

Some demographers frown at long-term projections because they do not include upswings and downswings in the demographic variables. Few, if any, demographers foresaw the baby boom. More recently, the impact of AIDS on mortality rates, especially in some African countries, was unexpected. Wars are very difficult to “predict.” In the projections presented in this report, I concentrate on the most current demographic data, whether fertility, mortality, or migration, which serve as the assumptions for this report. The question then becomes: *Given current demographic rates and assuming only slight, reasonable, and clearly stated changes*, what will be the total population size and age and racial composition of the nation in 2050 or 2100? Should the projected figures be alarming, then the American people, through their elected leaders, might consider doing something to assure that such “projections” will not materialize.

I’m concerned about the future growth of our nation. It is my fondest hope that these projections will alert enough people to assure that they will be proven incorrect in 2050 or 2100! Demographer Peter Morrison says it best: “the purpose of projecting population is not exclusively, or even primarily, to make accurate predictions. Rather, it is to identify and chart the likely effects of influences and contingencies that will determine future population size.”<sup>3</sup> Or to put it in popular vernacular: “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it; but if it is broke, do something about it.”

**Personal Experiences:** *Following each chapter, I have added a few personal observations pertinent to the topic at hand. Too often, demographers look solely at the numbers and neglect the personal*

*touch. While the numbers themselves may be awesome to ponder, an individual can sometimes miss the issue if he or she doesn't "feel" that such growth is occurring. When I was born, our nation's population had barely surpassed 100 million; now we are rapidly approaching 300 million! I might also add that politically I consider myself a liberal Democrat. I recall telling a college class that I had only voted for a non-Democrat once, when I voted for Wallace. After a brief pause, I added: "that was Henry, not George."*

## 2 POPULATION GROWTH

Let's first look at the Census Bureau projections to 2050, published in 1996. According to the medium projection—the one based on assumptions closest to current conditions—the population of the United States (about 275 million in 2000) will reach 394 million by 2050 (see Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1). That is an increase of almost 120 million or an overall growth of 50 percent in just half a century! As in the past, the media dutifully published the report without any comments as to how

the potential problems of such numbers could affect quality of life.

Exactly what causes population growth? As we know, there are three basic demographic variables: fertility, migration, and mortality. A country (or any defined region) grows—or declines, as is the case in some European countries today—numerically or through natural increase (i.e., births minus deaths) and/or through net migration (i.e., immigration minus emigration). For example, in the United States, in 1996 (the latest year for which data are available) there were 3.9 million births and 2.3 million deaths. Therefore, natural increase in that year totaled 1.6 million. But according to the Census Bureau, the population increased by 2.4 million between 1995 and 1996. We conclude that net migration accounted

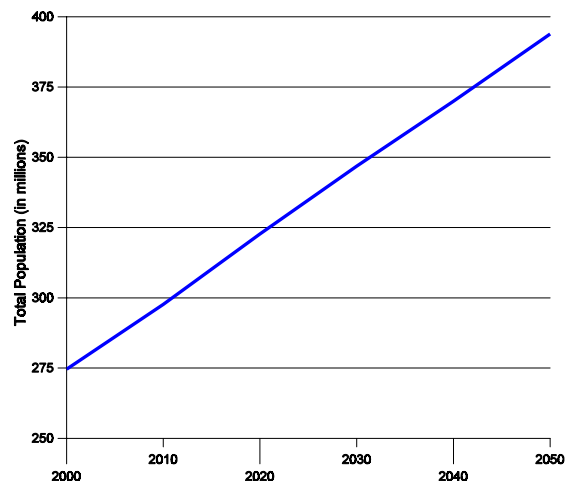
**Table 2.1 Projected Population of the U.S., 2000–2050 (in 000s)**

Year	Total Population
2000	274,634
2010	297,716
2020	322,742
2030	346,899
2040	369,980
2050	393,931

*Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population Projections of the U.S. by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1995–2050," *Current Population Reports P-25-1130* (1996).

for about 800,000 new inhabitants. These are approximations, but they nevertheless suggest that natural increase contributed about two-thirds of all growth in that year, and net migration, one-third.

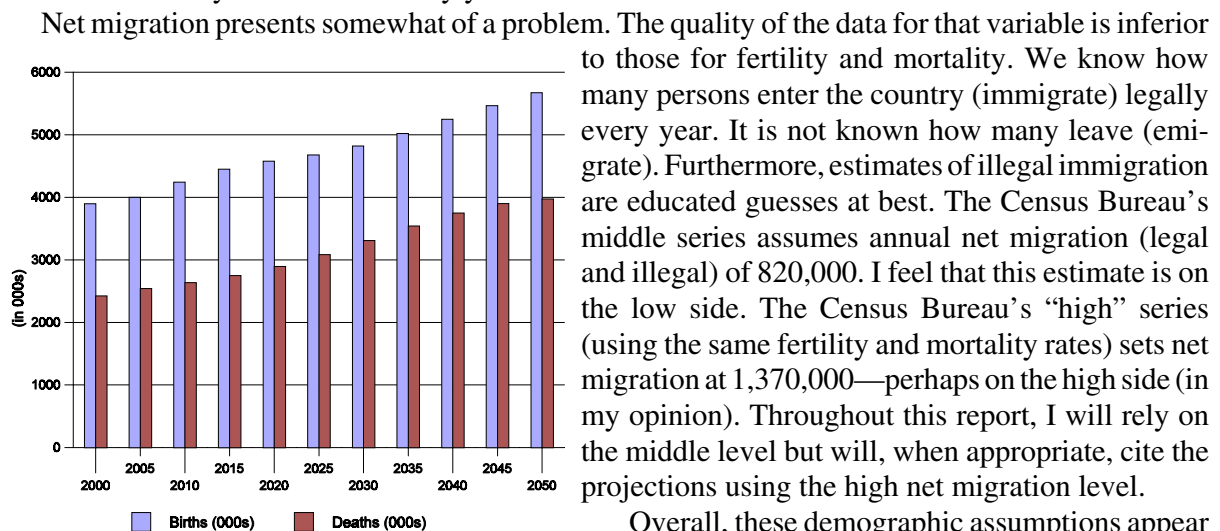
Care must be taken in interpreting these statistics. For example, if fertility fell sufficiently to allow deaths to equal or surpass births (as is the case in some Florida counties because of the large number of elderly), then it could be argued that with one immigrant, all growth is explained by immigration! This is absurd. However, it is not absurd to consider the fertility of immigrants. If we deduct the births (as well as the deaths) which are attributable to immigrants from the national totals, the impact of immigration increases considerably. In a recent article, Ed Lytwak has calculated that in 1996, "taken together, direct immigration and births to immigrants accounted for more than 1.5 million, or 61 percent, of total U.S. population growth."<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that natural increase includes both children of native-born citizens and children of immigrants. Determining



**Figure 2.1 Projected Population of the U.S., 2000–2050**

the exact contributions of natural increase and net migration to population growth is a complex matter. Suffice to say that net migration is an increasingly important factor in explaining growth. This does not diminish the significance of natural increase. Both are major factors in the swelling of the U.S. population.

The estimate of 394 million Americans by 2050 is derived from the most recent Census Bureau projections.<sup>5</sup> Earlier, I pointed out that projections can never be incorrect, only the assumptions may eventually be proven “off the mark.” The Census Bureau assumptions on fertility presume a constant total fertility rate for the entire period for each racial group, based on the 1995 data from the National Center for Health Statistics.<sup>6</sup> These childbearing figures are: White Non-Hispanic—1.8; Black Non-Hispanic—2.4; Asian Non-Hispanic—1.9; American Indian Non-Hispanic—2.1; Hispanic—3.0.<sup>7</sup> Because the share of Hispanics is expected to increase significantly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the overall total fertility rate is projected to increase from 2.0 in 1995 to 2.2 in 2050. This results from so-called “shifting shares.” As the share of Hispanics in the total population grows, while that of Non-Hispanic Whites falls, the overall rate increases, though no changes are noted for each specific group. Life expectancy is projected to increase slightly for all groups over the period—from 75.9 years overall in 1995 to 82.0 years in 2050. These are the vital rates for the Census Bureau’s “middle” series or projections. As can be seen in Figure 2.2, both the number of births and the number of deaths is expected to increase steadily over the next fifty years.



**Figure 2.2 Projected Births and Deaths, 2000–2050 (in 000s)**

Overall, these demographic assumptions appear to be fairly realistic. Fertility is held constant for all groups, life expectancy is assumed to increase at a relatively slow rate over the next fifty years, and net migration is slightly low in my opinion. Thus the projected population of 394 million for 2050 (with net migration of 820,000) is entirely possible, if not probable. Indeed, with the higher level of net migration—1,370,000—the U.S. population in 2050 would reach 438 million. My conclusion is that unless something is done to reduce fertility and/or immigration, the United States can expect to reach a population in the vicinity of 400 million in a mere fifty years. Any reduction in mortality greater than what is already projected, something that we all support, would result in an even larger population.

But what does this all mean for the quality of life of *all* Americans. I have noted that these projections, when reported in the media, gained scant attention. I will limit the discussion here to a handful of issues bearing on quality of life, acknowledging that numerous other population-related problems could be introduced. For example, the dangers posed to our environment are enormous.<sup>8</sup> These are discussed in detail elsewhere. I begin with perhaps the most important issue of all—education.<sup>9</sup>

## Education

It is generally agreed that our schools are having difficulties. At a national summit on education in the mid-1990s, Louis Gerstner, chairman of IBM, commented, “Our educational system is broken—we all know that. I could stand here for hours reading the grim statistics. We are behind [other industrialized nations] and in an increasingly global economy, I’m not liking our chances.” He added: “This is a national priority that rises above all others.”<sup>10</sup>

A 1996 San Jose *News-Mercury* editorial had this to say: “California’s university system still is respected, but it won’t be for long if professors have to dumb-down reading lists and problem sets to accommodate students with marginal skills. Lower academic standards will be inevitable if so many freshmen continue to enter unprepared.”<sup>11</sup> Again citing California, geographer William Clark recently wrote: “Twenty-six per-

***“This is a national priority that rises above all others.”***

cent of California adults aged 20 to 24 in 1990 lacked a high school diploma, the highest proportion in the nation.”<sup>12</sup> California’s predicament is not an isolated case, and much of this deficiency is attributable to increased levels of immigration.

The problems are not limited to poor quality of education. The education infrastructure is in shambles as well. In 1982, then Florida Gov. Bob Graham and a willing state legislature vowed to push Florida’s education system into the top 25 percent in America. More recently, the late Gov. Lawton Chiles called on a hesitant legislature to provide every Florida school child with a book and to repair leaking roofs in many of the state’s schools. Such demands are being repeated in many places.

In 1999, 53.2 million children were enrolled in grades K–12, surpassing 1998 enrollment by half a million students.<sup>13</sup> They are taught by about 3.7 million teachers who earn, on average, \$40,100 per year. Current school expenditures amount to about \$242 billion per year.<sup>14</sup> The teaching profession is attracting fewer and fewer college graduates. The job doesn’t pay very well and is increasingly dangerous as teachers are physically threatened every day—the tragedies in Colorado and Georgia are recent examples. In many parts of the country, teachers are faced with an increasing number of students who have little or no knowledge of English, in large part due to increasing immigration. Thus the demand for bilingual teachers is growing rapidly and will continue to do so in the future.

The quality of education is rapidly declining. Teachers are either unhappy or leaving the profession (or not entering it in the first place) and the increasingly multicultural background of schoolchildren presents another challenge to instructors. If that is the situation today, what will it be like in 2020 or in 2050?

Within a quarter century, if enrollment rates remain as they are today, there would be 60 million students in grades K–12, or 7 million more than in 2000. School expenditures, which are generally

divided between state and local revenues, would rise to \$300 billion. Indeed, school construction and repair spending reached a record \$17 billion last year.<sup>15</sup> If a typical school (elementary or secondary) averages about 600 students, that means that between now and 2020, 12,500 *new* schools would have to be constructed in addition to maintaining older schools. For example, “even though public school enrollment in Maine fell by 27,000 students between 1970 and 1995, the state spent \$338 million on new school construction in fast-growing towns.”<sup>16</sup> It means that 450,000 additional teachers would be needed, at a time when the teaching profession is not highly regarded. This is in addition to the countless thousands of teachers who will die, retire, or just give up on teaching as a livelihood.

Looking beyond 2020 to 2050, the nation can expect to have more than 70 million students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools. Further details are not necessary. It is obvious that the population growth envisioned under the Census Bureau’s medium scenario will pose enormous challenges for our already deteriorating educational system.

Given these parameters, can we, as a nation, solve the educational infrastructure growth problems while at the same time attempting to improve the quality of the schools (for example, by ensuring that all classes have computers). Is it possible to avoid a statement like the one mentioned above at a future national summit on education? It is difficult to be optimistic.

We are at a crossroads in education in the United States. Conditions are worsening while numbers are growing; students are increasingly diverse in background and it costs 50 percent more to teach a

***“To a considerable extent, our quality of life depends on our ability to get around when and where we like.”***

child who doesn’t speak English than to teach one who does. Unless something drastic is done, and soon, to both reduce the growth in school enrollments and improve the quality of education through better training and higher pay for teachers, parental involvement, and increased financial

support throughout the nation, the words of Louis Gerstner will be proven all too correct in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Transportation

Americans love their automobiles. In 1986, there were about 195 million vehicles on the road. In 1996, over 206 million vehicles were registered—about 1 car for each adult. However, in those ten years, the number of highway miles hardly increased. In 1996, state and federal highways totaled 3.9 million miles. Ten years earlier, they totaled 3.86 million. We are all aware of the results: more highway congestion. To make matters worse, close to 30 percent of all highways are considered to be in either poor or mediocre condition.

What happens when we add 125 million people, as we may between 2000 and 2050? If our ratio of vehicles to persons remains as it is today, we will add almost 100 million more vehicles by 2050. Can our highway system handle 300 million cars and trucks? Will an entirely new interstate system be needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Will we simply add on lane after lane to all our roads, as is now being done in rapidly growing states like Florida? Already our highways are congested. Will this worsen perhaps to the point where, like it or not, and despite our love affair with the automobile, we will necessarily turn to public transportation to get to work and to do our shopping? To a considerable

extent, our quality of life depends on our ability to get around when and where we like. We may not have the option in 2050.

## Crime

Crime has been a major concern for many Americans. Even in towns like Canton, Michigan, “police, officials and residents agree the crime spurt results from the growing pains brought on by the skyrocketing population jump in the last decade.”<sup>17</sup> In state after state, demands are being made that those convicted of major crimes serve their entire sentences. But at the same time, courts have ordered the release of some prisoners because of inadequate conditions in the nation’s prisons. The answer, in some cases, has been to build more prisons. But even for such a purpose, many people are opposed to paying higher taxes. And certainly, those prisons are not to be built near the homes of the residents—NIMBY (“not in my back yard”)!

What is the current situation? As of 30 June 1998, there were almost 1.3 million persons incarcerated in the nation’s federal and state prisons,<sup>18</sup> and that number has risen every year since at least 1970. Its growth over 1997 was 4.8 percent. As of 1998, there were 452 prison inmates per 100,000 persons—a significant increase from the 1990 figure of 292 per 100,000.

***“These are not simply numbers; they represent the acts that will take place as more and more people crowd into an area that is not growing.”***

Although the number of prisoners keeps increasing, there has been a slight decline in the number of reported crimes since 1991, when they totaled 14,873,000. By 1993, reported crimes were down to 14,141,000. Similarly the rate per 100,000 fell from 5,898 in 1991 (the highest ever recorded) to 5,483 in 1993 (the lowest since 1986). It has since fallen even more.

What about the future? Hopefully crime rates will keep falling but we cannot expect any major plunge soon. We will be very fortunate if we can maintain a rate of around 5,000 per 100,000 population, which would match the rate for 1984.

But even with guarded optimism about the crime rate, the sheer increases in population guarantee massive growth in the number of prisoners in future years. Another 500,000 prisoners added to the current 1 million is not out of the question. Many more prisons will be required in all parts of the country. As for criminal acts, we can expect close to 20 million per year by 2050.

The entire crime infrastructure is another important example of what rapid population growth really means for all of us. These are not simply numbers; they represent the acts that will take place as more and more people crowd into an area that is not growing.

## Waste

Of all the problems associated with continued rapid population growth, garbage and waste disposal may be among the most visible. Today, our cities produce more than twice as much solid waste as they did in 1960.<sup>19</sup> The problems associated with waste disposal are critical.

Because they were polluting, or simply full, the number of landfills declined from 20,000 in 1978 to 6,000 in 1990, and was down to 3,581 by 1995. Cities have unsuccessfully tried to unload the waste on third world



countries. . . . Major eastern cities have been negotiating with rural counties as far away as New Mexico and Texas to accept the stuff. The nation is on a treadmill.<sup>20</sup>

Today, each of us generates over 13 tons of waste each year (not including garbage). Of that, about 2 percent is considered hazardous waste. These wastes, mostly toxic, do their damage largely by polluting the groundwater supplies on which about half the U.S. population depends for drinking water. There is no way of knowing exactly what toxic chemicals are already on their way to our aquifers, from leaking chemical drums, nearly two million

***“Urban sludge and agriculture are two major culprits in the degradation of surface waters and groundwater.”***

buried gas station tanks, and other miscellaneous tanks around the nation that are not subject to regulation. “In sum, the problem of toxic wastes presents a huge but unknown bill for cleaning up past poisoning and preventing its continuation.”<sup>21</sup>

Insofar as garbage is concerned, a recent *Parade* magazine article pointed out: “The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that, on average, we each produce 4.4 pounds of garbage a day, for a total of 217 million tons in 1997.”<sup>22</sup> (Incidentally, the article failed to even mention the impact that continued population growth would have on total garbage!)

The news is not encouraging. What happens if we add another 125 more people to our nation? We are already hitting the limits. Urban sludge and agriculture are two major culprits in the degradation of surface waters and groundwater, and runoff will occur even if the sludge is put on agricultural land. A 50-percent intensification—through increased population—is a grim thought.

## Housing

In the United States in 1996, there were 101 million occupied housing units and about 2.5 persons per housing unit. This compares to 92 million just six years earlier. Furthermore, these units were not randomly distributed across the nation. California, for example, had about 13 million housing units; New York had 8 million. Wyoming and Alaska, on the other hand, had a little over 200,000 each.

Where will the next 125 million Americans live? Perhaps we should first ask: How many additional housing units will be needed if the ratio of 2.5 persons per unit is maintained (which is doubtful, given the increasing divorce rates and single motherhood)? An additional 50 million units will be needed to replace old, decaying units constructed many years ago.

At first glance, this may appear to be great news for builders and contractors—that is the seductiveness of population growth. More people mean more jobs, so why worry? 400 million? 500 million? No problem. But again we ask: Where will they live? Our inner cities are decaying and our close-in suburbs are just about full in most parts of the country as urban sprawl emerges almost everywhere. Few people will move to the colder states like the Dakotas. The end result will undoubtedly be housing developments that are built further and further away from the urban centers, in urban sprawls, in some instances destroying our wetlands. This ex-urbanization will result in longer distances to travel to work, more highway congestion, and greater use of fuels that will in turn contribute to further contamination of the atmosphere. Bear in mind that the automobile is our primary source of pollution.

We are fast covering our land surface with houses, shopping malls, industrial parks and the like, which contributes to higher costs for housing lots. And then we wonder why so many localized floods occur. The reason is quite simple: concrete doesn't soak up rainfall like earth does—which is one more reason why adding 125 million people is *not* just another piece of news for page 12 of the daily newspaper.

## Water

Water shortages and water quality vary widely in different parts of the nation. In fact, the availability of water has become a source of contention between “have” and “have not” states or sections of states. Simply put, Americans each year draw 25 percent more water from groundwater resources than is replaced by nature. “Falling water tables have already curtailed irrigation from some aquifers, and the competition for water between irrigated agriculture and urban population growth has already led to systematic diversion of water from agriculture to cities in Arizona and California.”<sup>23</sup>

We can only conclude that 125 million additional people will exacerbate what is already a very serious problem for the United States. Water shortages will directly affect agriculture, and the prospects for irrigation are dim. Urban demand and the need to protect our wetlands threaten the cheap, subsidized irrigation supplies in California, which is the nation's largest agricultural producer. Moreover, groundwater aquifers are subsiding in areas where agriculture has become critically dependent on them. The Ogallala Aquifer in the Plains states is the largest and most important example. Some experts estimate that it may be entirely depleted within the next 25 years.<sup>24</sup>

***“Americans each year draw 25 percent more water from groundwater resources than is replaced by nature.”***

We cannot take out more water than enters the system (though we already do); we cannot see our aquifers dry up and disappear (though we face the prospect). Millions more people will have that effect, however. The water wars of the 19th century made famous (or infamous) by western movies could return to haunt us in the 21st century, if population growth continues as projected by the Census Bureau.<sup>25</sup> This could, in turn, lead to food shortages and significant increases in the cost of food.

## Recreation

Visiting one of the nation's beautiful parks or using our glorious beaches may not be as important as having pure air and water, but the ability to enjoy the grandiosity of our beautiful country certainly contributes to what we loosely call “quality of life.” Already, however, even trying to visit our national parks has become a test of endurance. In many cases, reservations must be made months ahead. When one finally arrives at a park, the traffic is often intolerable.

The National Park System comprises about 75 million acres. Its size is not likely to grow by 50 percent to accommodate 125 million more people. Neither will additional beaches suddenly appear. Indeed, they may diminish as pollution claims more and more beachfront. At best, parks and beaches will expand only slightly, but many more people will want to use them. Inevitably, quality of life will suffer because of rapid population growth.

A recent segment of NBC news portrayed the growing problems associated with visiting our

national parks. When Tom Brokaw mentioned the word “overpopulation,” I grew more attentive. Alas, Brokaw was referring to the overpopulation of grizzly bears—not people!

## Government

Increasingly, we read about a growing dissatisfaction with government—federal, state, and local. There is a feeling that one individual’s opinion is meaningless. Consider this population-related fact regarding the U.S. House of Representatives. The House consists of 435 members, each representing about 600,000 constituents.<sup>26</sup> In 1950, each member of the House of Representatives represented 350,000 people. In the Senate, each senator represents a whole state—32 million people in the case of California. By 2050, according to the medium projections from the Census Bureau, each House member will represent almost 900,000 constituents. We could always double the number of members of Congress, but that would be a very unpopular move.<sup>27</sup> The alternative: less true democracy, again because of rapid population growth.<sup>28</sup>

## Environment

Much has been written on the environmental issue and I have referred you to Lindsey Grant’s excellent work, *Juggernaut*. I want to add a few brief points that are all related to population growth. Consider our oil and energy resources; to a considerable extent, these resources are dependent on foreign imports and possibly subject to growing security risks. As we add people, and their automobiles—and a growing reliance on energy sources—this dependency will increase. There will come a point when we may become almost totally dependent on some “not so reliable” sources for these resources.

Consider also our food resources. As population keeps growing, the cost of food will undoubtedly go up as well. We must also bear in mind that increased population, especially as it spreads into the suburbs and exurbs, consumes farm land. In fact, we have lost 31 million acres of farmland since 1960. This cannot continue indefinitely.

***“Rapid growth, rather than lowering the average cost of services, eventually raises them.”***

While not purely environmental, we must also consider the individual freedoms that we all cherish. What happens to these freedoms as we become packed more closely together? The result is bound to be more conflict, and therefore, more laws. To repeat the question: “Will we all get along?”

Population growth is not simply about “more numbers” as much of the media and the policy makers imply. It’s very much about availability of resources and quality of life. Population growth, especially in a country of this size, is an important problem that must be considered very seriously. That our policy makers will not even discuss this issue is indefensible.

We must accept the fact that continued population growth is *not* good. While it may appear in the short run that more customers means less expensive services, as the country gets bigger the infrastructure reaches its carrying capacity. The original electrical grid no longer suffices, more police must be hired, roads and schools no longer satisfy the needs of a growing population. The houses have been built, but soon the roads are too narrow, and every expansion generates expensive dislocation. The result is *diseconomies of scale*. Rapid growth, rather than lowering the average cost of services, eventually raises them. As economist Philip Longman explains: “Put another way, once population

growth becomes sufficient to cause diseconomies of scale, marginal cost, which is the cost of providing for one extra person or unit of consumption, begins to rise faster than average costs.”<sup>29</sup>

Many examples of the impact of continued population growth on the quality of life have been reported in the media. However, in almost all cases, it is the *results* of growth (such as educational problems or water problems) that are mentioned. Population growth is almost never mentioned as the true (though not the only) cause. The Los Angeles *Times* provides a recent example of such inadequate reporting. In an article entitled: “CA’s Transit Needs \$100 Billion in Next Decade,” not a word was said about the possibility that reducing population growth might just alleviate this terrible problem!<sup>30</sup> On the east coast, in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia (including seven cities in the Norfolk to Newport News area), a Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot* article was headlined: “Area Roads in Trouble, Leaders Say.”<sup>31</sup> Over the next twenty years, it is estimated that that area will require \$13 billion for highways alone, but there is not a word about rapid population growth. The main culprit is Virginia Beach, where the political leaders are obsessed with reaching half a million people as soon as possible.

Yet, there is hope on the horizon.

Increasingly, Americans are beginning to realize that we are already overpopulated. In a 1996 nationwide poll by the Roper-Starch Organization, 59 percent of respondents felt that the maxi-

***“Americans are beginning to realize that we are already overpopulated.”***

mum population should be 265 million—the population at the time—or less. A similar proportion (58%) felt that the yearly growth rate should be less than 1 percent.<sup>32</sup>

People are getting concerned about urban sprawl, and rightfully so. The nation is losing an estimated 50 acres of farmland an hour to development. The Georgia legislature, at the behest of Gov. Roy Barnes, has instituted a transportation super agency with broad powers to impose transit systems and highways on local governments, restrict development, and even put pressure on cities and counties to raise taxes. “Under the bill, if a county decides to build a shopping mall in an overly congested area, or an area without adequate transportation, a newly created Georgia Regional Transportation Authority could in essence veto the mall by refusing to issue permits necessary to tie it into the road system.”<sup>33</sup> In Oregon, county commissioners may no longer approve new developments; instead, the electorate votes on them. “Oregon is well known for pioneering statewide growth management. In 1973, the state adopted legislation mandating that each city and county cooperatively establish an urban growth boundary.”<sup>34</sup>

The San Jose *Mercury-News* reports that Scotts Valley in Santa Cruz County has decided that “the maximum amount of development allowable in the water district, which serves 85 percent of the city, is 15,000 people.”<sup>35</sup> Other cities, like Davis, California, and Prince George County, Maryland, are considering similar moves. “The problem is so acute that 240 sprawl-control initiatives appeared on ballots last November. More than 70% passed.”<sup>36</sup>

The situation in Loudoun County, Virginia (the third fastest growing county in the nation) is particularly tense. Loudoun County adds more than 1,000 new residents every month. To keep up with this growth, county officials believe that they will have to build, over the next ten years, 156 new projects at a cost of \$1.1 billion. This estimate includes 43 new school projects costing over \$757 million. These new schools must be staffed, maintained, and run. The county supervisors would like to initiate a new policy, “one that would allow them to stop issuing residential permits in any given

year once the county exhausts its ability to finance new schools. If developers wanted to obtain additional permits, they would have to pay the full cost of school construction.”<sup>37</sup> There is some doubt whether the state General Assembly would approve such a drastic measure, given the clout of developers in Virginia (as elsewhere).

Vice-president Al Gore has spoken movingly of the problem of “livability”: “Many Americans today are reaching for a new prosperity defined not just by the quantity of their bank accounts, but also by the quality of their lives.”<sup>38</sup> Finally, there may be a glimmer of hope that people are beginning to recognize the terrible effects of runaway population growth, as demonstrated by suburban sprawl. Certainly, if population increases had been limited in recent decades, these sprawl issues would be far less problematic today. However, they would still be present to a lesser degree, as long as other factors like the economy and inner city problems persist.

## Beyond 2050

But what about beyond 2050? The Census Bureau projections I have been using end in 2050. Taking their medium 2050 population projection of 394 million as a starting point, I have projected the United States population an additional 50 years, to 2100 (see Table 2.2 and Figure 2.3). As stated earlier, it is not my intent to go into much detail for this period. Too many things can happen to render these projections obsolete. Nevertheless, they do serve the purpose of answering the question: What

**Table 2.2 Projected Population of the U.S. 2050–2100 (in 000s)**

Year	Total Population
2050	393,930
2060	412,990
2070	438,090
2080	466,570
2090	498,270
2100	531,080

Source: L. Bouvier, based on U.S. Census Bureau assumptions for 2050.

if current demographic patterns continue *through* the 21<sup>st</sup> century? I assume that the demographic rates used in the Census Bureau’s projections will continue unchanged between 2050 and 2100. That is to say, the total fertility rate will remain at 2.2 over the 50-year period, and life expectancy will remain 83 years. I also assume that the lower level of net immigration—820,000 per year—will be maintained. From the vantage point of early 2000, these assumptions appear quite conservative. Given continued immigration it is conceivable that the fertility rate could rise during that period because of “shifting shares,” and it is hoped that life expectancy will continue to increase. Finally, by

relying on the lower level of net immigration, I feel that I’m well within the bounds of conservative estimates.

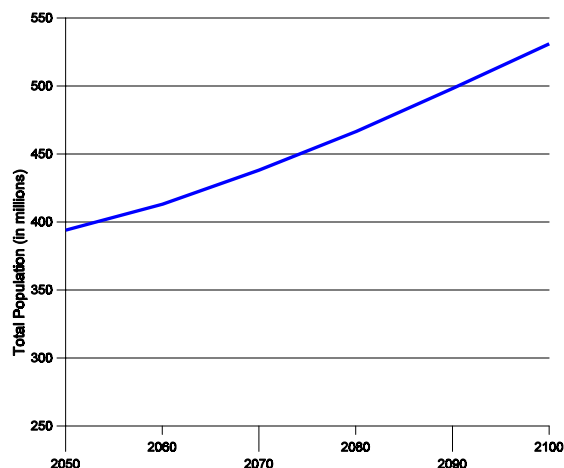
Even with such cautious assumptions, the U.S. population would approach 498 million in 2090, surpass half a billion by 2095 and reach 531 billion by 2100. During the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the nation’s population would have almost doubled! Between 2050 and 2100, 137 million additional people would have been added to the nation’s population. I don’t feel it necessary to revisit each sector, such as schools, water supplies, highways, and suburban sprawl to explain the challenges such growth would pose for all Americans.

Unfortunately, we are a long way from convincing our political leaders that this is a critical issue. Dealing as it does with such matters as immigration and, indirectly, family planning, the topic remains

far too controversial for our less than courageous legislators. Unless people speak out now, the nation is in for a dangerous 21<sup>st</sup> century, with more and more people in exactly those places that are already overcrowded.

This is also true of places where growth problems are not anticipated. Rhode Island is a good example. For the past thirty years, the state's population has hovered around one million. Statewide, little if any growth is noted. However, of its five counties, four are either losing population or remaining constant. Only Washington County (popularly known as "South County"), in the southwest portion of the state, is growing at a rate of 10 percent per year. That county is experiencing similar growth problems to those noted for California and Florida. Most relatively "nongrowing" states, such as Michigan, have comparable regions where urban sprawl is causing new problems.

Given current growth patterns, we can expect 400 million Americans in the foreseeable future and well over *half a billion* within a century. "Will we all get along?" is a reasonable question to ask.



**Figure 2.3 Projected Population of the U.S., 2050–2100 (in millions)**

## Addendum

As this monograph was being completed, new projections were released by the Census Bureau and are presently available on the Internet at the following address: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/natproj.html>.

I have decided not to use these latest calculations for a number of reasons:

- 1) The demographic assumptions change over time. Thus, it is not possible to answer the question: What would happen in 2050 or 2100 if the demographic variables remained unchanged?
- 2) Fertility is assumed to converge to 2.1 for all ethnic groups by 2150. I feel that this results in the long-run fertility of Non-Hispanic Whites eventually being artificially high, while that for Hispanics becomes artificially low.
- 3) Immigration assumptions are higher than in the earlier projections. This may be appropriate but emigration is calculated by rates rather than numbers and over time, these numbers rise considerably as the population grows. Because of these deficiencies in the new projections, throughout the balance of this report I will be referring solely to the older projections made in 1996.
- 4) Nevertheless it should be noted that these most recent projections are even more dismal than those I am using. According to the middle series, the U.S. population will reach 394 million in 2050 and approach 571 million by 2100—and, as usual, not one cautionary word from the media.

**Personal Experiences:** *In the summer of 1999, as I was writing this report, I took a week off to visit members of my family in Virginia Beach, a drive of about 750 miles from my home in central Florida. Ordinarily I fly, but airlines are so overcrowded nowadays that it is no longer a pleasure to rely on that mode of transportation. I had not driven to Virginia Beach for some six years and looked forward to the experience. Since most of the time I would be on Interstates (10 and 95)—in the South and in mid-week, out of season—I was not concerned with traffic problems. How wrong can one be? I was appalled at the traffic, especially the increased number of tractor trailer trucks traveling at speeds well above the legal limits. Here is population growth at work! There was some consolation in the realization that things must be even worse in the northeast corridor—i.e., from Washington to Boston. The bottom line: population growth affects every aspect of life.*

### 3 AGE COMPOSITION

Earlier, I pointed out that, when looking at the demographic picture of the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, population growth is not the only matter of concern. Shifts in age composition are almost as important and have already captured the attention of numerous scholars and policy makers. Former Secretary of Commerce Peter G. Peterson recently published *Gray Dawn* which, though sometimes too dismal and too short on noting actual population growth, is an example of this concern.<sup>39</sup>

To recap, at mid-20th century the median age of the American population was about 25. Now, it is around 36. Using a different measure of aging, in 1950, 8.2 percent of Americans were 65 or over; at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that share had risen to 12.6 percent. Numerically, the increase is substantial—from 12.1 million in 1950 to 34.7 million in 2000. All this begs the question: How does a society “get older”? Increasing life expectancy of the elderly is an often-assumed answer, but while such gains do add a few older individuals, the decline in fertility is a much more important contributor to an “aging” population. With fewer children being born, the proportion of elderly rises. Other factors include sudden changes in demographic behavior, especially fertility. Our baby boom was so huge that it contributed to a “younging” of the population until that cohort reached about 25 or 30 years old. Then it began to contribute to an “aging” of the population as the cohort entered its mid-30s. In 1970 the median age was 27.9; by 2000 it will be about 35.7. As indicated in Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1 below, we can expect more overall societal aging as we proceed into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Table 3.1 Selected Age Proportions in the U.S., 2000–2050 (% and 000s)**

Year	% Under 18	Number Under 18	% 65+	Number 65+	Median Age
2000	25.7	70,782	12.6	34,709	35.7
2010	24.4	72,510	13.2	39,408	37.2
2020	24.1	77,604	16.5	53,220	37.6
2030	24.1	83,442	20.0	69,379	38.5
2040	24.0	88,817	20.3	75,233	38.6
2050	24.4	96,118	20.0	78,859	38.1

*Source:* U.S. Bureau of the Census, “Population Projections of the U.S. by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1995–2050,” *Current Population Reports P-25-1130* (1996).

What is in store for the American people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Demographers can be quite confident of some projections, since the elderly of 2050 have already been born! We know how many there are, and we are quite confident of our mortality assumptions. Thus we have a good idea how many elderly there will be in 2050, although these numbers could be affected by changes in levels of immigration.

Relying again on the middle Census Bureau projection, the elderly population will grow to almost 79 million by 2050, more than doubling in a mere 50 years. To a considerable extent this is attributable to the baby boom cohort entering in its retirement stage. By about 2015, the earliest “boomers” will be reaching 65. From then on, that age group will grow from 45 million to 79 million in just 35 years! The baby boom has affected every segment of society as it passed through its various stages; so, too, will it have an immense impact on the elderly segment. In addition, the elderly group will



itself get older. In 2000, some 12 percent of persons 65 and over will be 85 and over; that share will almost double, to 22 percent, by 2050.

While we are relatively confident about the *number* of elderly over the next half a century or so, the same is not true of their *share* of the total population, which is partially dependent on future fertility and immigration. According to the Census Bureau projections, that share will rise, and by 2050, one in five Americans will be 65 or over. It is clear that the nation's elderly population will grow at a rapid rate during the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Numerically it will more than double, proportionally, it could nearly double. The overall median age of the country will reach 38.

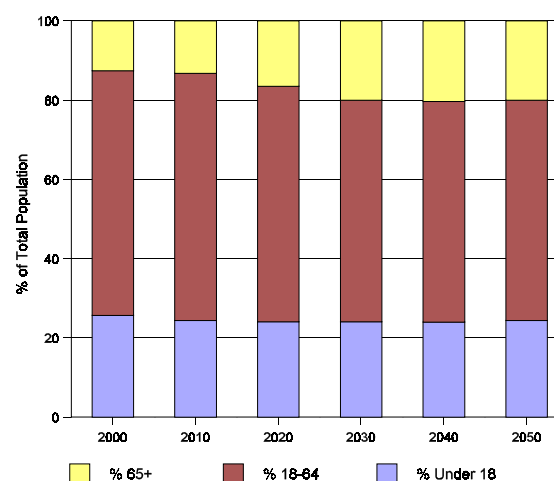
Because of both the baby boom and its echo, and increases in life expectancy among the elderly, the number of centenarians is expected to grow from 72,000 in 2000 to 834,000 in 2050 (see Table 3.2 and Figure 3.2). The Willard Scott of that year will in no way be able to keep up with such birthday announcements!

**Table 3.2 Number and Percent of Centenarians in U.S., 2000–2050**

Year	Percent of Persons 65+	Total Number of Centenarians
2000	0.2	72,000
2010	0.3	131,000
2020	0.4	214,000
2030	0.5	324,000
2040	0.6	447,000
2050	1.1	834,000

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population Projections of the U.S. by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1995–2050, *Current Population Reports* P-25–1130 (1996).

What will these changing numbers, both of the old and the young, mean for dependency? Demographers sometimes define the *dependency ratio* as the total number of persons 0–17 and 65 and over per 100 persons aged 18–64. Thus a dependency ratio of 62 (as it was in 1990) means that there are 62 "dependent" persons per 100 "active" persons. I must emphasize that this is an imprecise measure of dependency. All people 18–64 are not necessarily active in the labor force, and many individuals beyond 65 are still active in the labor force. However, this measure serves as a guide, and comparisons over time point out shifts in this so-called "dependency." As Table 3.3 and Figure 3.3



**Figure 3.1 Selected Age Proportions in the U.S., 2000–2050**

What about the demographic situation at the other (younger) end of the life cycle? Recall that the Census Bureau projections assume no change in the race-specific fertility rates. However, because the Hispanic proportion of the population is expected to rise substantially—and because it exhibits the highest fertility—the overall national fertility rate is projected to climb from 2.0 to 2.2, a result of these shifting shares in the population. Thus the youngest segment of the population (ages 0 through 17) will also grow—from almost 71 million in 2000 to 78 million in 2020, and 96 million by 2050. But its *share* of the total population will hardly vary over the 50-year period—hovering around 25 percent.

show, the dependency ratio, after falling briefly through 2020, will begin to climb again, and will reach 79.9 by 2050. (Ironically, that was the exact dependency ratio in 1900!) Most of that growth will be attributable to gains in elderly dependency. For example, while youth dependency will only increase from 41.8 percent in 2000 to 43.9 percent in 2050, the increase in elderly dependency will go from 20.9 percent to 36.0 percent over the same period.

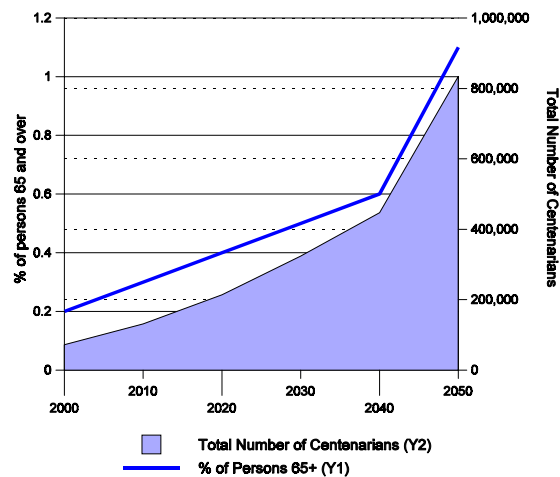
Should these projections be anywhere close to reality (and they should be, given that the older dependents are already alive), the United States will face some serious age-related problems in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rather than wringing our hands and despairing, we should bear in mind that this upcoming age challenge is simply the final direct blow of the baby boom.<sup>40</sup> When that cohort entered their school years, the nation was handicapped by a serious shortage of teachers as well as an inadequate educational infrastructure. Many states constructed new colleges to accommodate the millions of young men and women pursuing higher education. Throughout its life cycle, the baby boom cohort has posed and will continue to pose problems for society overall. Followed as it has been by a “baby bust,” its impact

**Table 3.3 Number of Dependents per 100 Persons Age 18–64 Years, 1990–2050**

Year	Under Age 18	Age 65 and Over	Total Dependents
1990	41.7	20.3	62.0
2000	41.8	20.5	62.4
2010	39.0	21.2	60.2
2020	40.4	27.7	68.2
2030	43.0	35.7	78.7
2040	43.1	36.5	79.7
2050	43.9	36.0	79.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P–25, Nos. 1095, 1127, 1130.

will grow that the system might fail. But demographically, little can be done to ameliorate the problem of a growing elderly population. A few “cornucopians” like journalist Ben J. Wattenberg and the late business economist, Julian Simon, argue for having more children and increased levels of



**Figure 3.2 Number and Percent of Centenarians in the U.S., 2000–2050**

appears even more dramatic. Whenever there is a sudden and significant shift in one of the demographic variables, and that shift eventually ends, societal problems can be expected. Many European countries experienced such upheavals following the two world wars. The United States must adjust to the challenges presented by the baby boom as well as its successor, the baby bust. Having survived the earlier baby boom challenges, the United States must survive as that generation prepares to enter the senior part of its life cycle.

Recognizing this is small solace to those who will have to live with the problem. As the number of “active” persons who contribute to the Social Security and Medicare systems declines proportionately, the problems of financing these two programs will be exacerbated. Fears

immigration.<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, these advocates of “more and more” never indicate the impact on population size if Americans did average 3 children (as advocated by Wattenberg) and immigration was increased to 2 million per year (as recommended by Simon). By 2100, the United States population would surpass 1.2 *billion*! And it would be still growing at a rapid rate. Remedies for the nation’s elderly “problem” are not to be found in demographic *growth*. The nation’s policy makers must look elsewhere.

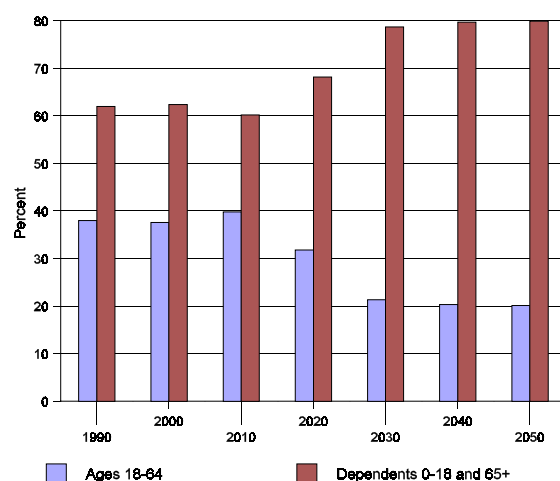
Although the growing elderly population will pose difficulties for society, a major problem may well be developing the will and commitment necessary to switch the emphasis from expenditures for the young to expenditures for the aged. Making such a shift is far from simple. Political difficulties can be expected from any suggestion that expenditures for the two age groups are interchangeable. Current per capita public expenditures to support an elderly person are three times what they are for youth. This could be misleading, however. As Australian demographer Katharine Betts points out,

Most of the costs of supporting and caring for children are borne by parents, not by taxpayers. Parents provide economic support, perhaps for seventeen or eighteen years, perhaps even longer, and parents (especially mothers) put in years of unpaid domestic labor and forgo many opportunities in paid work and leisure. Many of these costs are hard to quantify but it is clear that the total costs (public and private) of supporting a child far exceed the total costs of supporting an elderly person.<sup>42</sup>

Much public spending on young people is for education, which is financed largely by state and local taxes, whereas most public spending for the elderly comes from federal funds. An increasing proportion of older persons could thus raise the issue of federal versus state and local responsibilities and spending.

Does 65 have to be the “retirement” age? When our Social Security system was set up, life expectancy was a little less than 65. Perhaps the retirement age should increase gradually to 70 or even 75—today’s average life expectancy. Should payroll deductions for Social Security (and Medicare) come disproportionately from those least able to pay for them? Should there be a maximum amount beyond which the affluent pay nothing from their earnings? For many poorer Americans, more is taken out of their pay checks for FICA than for withholding taxes. For some Americans, the maximum earning from which FICA can be deducted is perhaps reached on January 1 of any given year! In late 1999, Congress and the executive branch are engaged in political debate to see who can benefit the most (politically, not socially) from changes in our retirement system. That system can still be saved, not by demographic tinkering, but by political will and courage.

Will conditions improve after 2050? The prospects are not good (see Table 3.4). Though the elderly population will drop slightly after 2050, by 2075 it will begin to grow again and will approach



**Figure 3.3 Number of Dependents per 100 Persons Ages 18-64 Years, 1990–2050**

92 million by 2100. But by then the proportion 65 and over will have fallen slightly, to 17.3 percent of the entire population. Both the dependency ratio and the median age of the population will remain stable over the 2050–2100 period. Thus, the long-run scenario is not promising. As a nation, we must adjust to an ever-aging population. This is not all bad. We will be living longer; hopefully with progress in medical research, more elderly will be in good health than are today. It is possible that American society will have redefined the stages of its life cycle as a larger portion of the people are elderly. Indeed, just as the term “teen-ager” was coined earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the 21<sup>st</sup> century may see another age-oriented term developed to describe those between 65 and 75. The elderly may well include only those ages 75 and over.

The United States must try hard to avoid major confrontations between age groups. The growing elderly portion of the population can vote; its younger counterparts cannot. School construction expenditures might be voted down simply because the elderly do not favor them. The young, fearful of future Social Security deficits, may resent the “subsidies” (as some call them) given to older people. While controversies remain subdued at this time, they could explode later. Again I ask: “Will we all get along?”

**Table 3.4 U.S. Population 65 and Over, 2050–2100 (% and 000s)**

Year	% of Population	Median Age	Number
2050	20.0	38	78,860
2060	18.5	37	76,530
2070	17.5	37	76,800
2080	17.2	37	80,190
2090	17.1	36	85,050
2100	17.3	37	91,770

Source: L. Bouvier, based on U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports P-25-1130* (1996), assumptions for 2050.

**Personal Experiences:** *Living in Florida as I have for the past ten years, one gets a “preview” of what life will be like in the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as other states see their age distributions approach those of Florida today. Living in a retirement community, as I did for a few years, is an even better example of what lies ahead for Americans. This situation is not, in my view, ideal. A retirement community is segregated by age. After a time, I longed to see a school bus. Despite their many faults, I yearned to see younger people—yes, I confess—even teenagers! An older society may be more resistant to needed change than a younger one. Old folks often have built-in ideas and values that are difficult to change. As a French demographer, whose name escapes me, once said: “Old people, in old houses, ruminate about old ideas.” Of course, in such a community, specialists of all kinds who cater to the old are to be found—from cardiologists to optometrists to “Mr. Fixits.” If certain sections of Florida are a model, 21<sup>st</sup> century America will be vastly different from today’s society.*

## 4 Racial and Ethnic Composition

I turn now to perhaps the most controversial (and possibly not exactly “politically correct”) portion of this report. In this chapter I examine the rapidly changing racial and ethnic composition of the United States. Many Americans are unaware of the rapid shifts taking place in the makeup of the nation’s population. Indeed, in a few sections of the country such shifts are barely noticeable. However, those sections are becoming rarer as immigrants and their families flock into areas hitherto populated by the native-born. For example, there is “now talk of the ‘Latinization’ of rural California.”<sup>43</sup> In fact, “most cities that have attracted waves of new immigrants during the 1990s are losing native-born Americans who are moving to less-congested, lower cost cities.”<sup>44</sup>

Much research has been done, culminating in numerous monographs, some favoring more heterogeneity, others arguing that the nation is fast losing its basic character.<sup>45</sup> In this chapter, I am concerned solely with the changing shares of the population at the national level and the reasons this is happening so rapidly.

In 1990, as noted in the introduction, just over three-quarters of all Americans were Non-Hispanic-White (or simply “White” according my earlier footnote), 12.4 percent were Black, Hispanics comprised 8.7 percent of the population, and Asians and Others (which includes Native Americans), 3.3 percent. This is in marked contrast to 1950, when almost nine out of ten Americans were White (including those Hispanics who indicated that they were White). At that time the actual total number of Hispanics was not calculated.

How and why did these shifts—which will continue—occur? The basic reason is the enormous increase in immigration following the 1965 modifications to immigration law. These were the biggest changes in immigration law since 1924, abolishing the national origins system and restrictions on Asian immigration. They raised the annual quota for eastern-hemisphere immigrants to 170,000, and placed a ceiling of 120,000 per year on total western-hemisphere immigration. In 1978 this was changed to a worldwide ceiling of 290,000, with a maximum of 20,000 per country. However, spouses, unmarried minor children, and parents of U.S. citizens are all exempt from these limits. This gives us the very high actual levels of “legal” immigration we see today.

Asians in particular have made good use of the preference system. In the years immediately after 1968, well-educated Asians took advantage of the professional preference categories to move to the United States, or adjusted from student or business visas to permanent resident status. After five years

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***“... close to one million persons legally migrate to the United States every year . . .”***

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of residence they could become citizens and then were eligible to bring in immediate relatives, as well as other close relatives—without numerical restrictions—under the family reunification provisions of the preference

system. Eventually these relatives in turn could, in the same way, further enlarge the family groups in the U.S.—a process known as “chain migration.” Thus the door swung wide open to Asians, and remained relatively wide open for immigrants from Latin America. These two regions became the major sources of post-1965 immigration.

Legal immigration numbers have risen steadily since the 1965 amendments took full effect in 1968. Presently, close to one million persons legally migrate to the United States every year (and many more migrate illegally).<sup>46</sup> Especially striking has been the change in the origins of legal

immigrants. The proportion of immigrants from the traditional sending regions of Europe has shrunk to less than 20 percent of all immigrants, while that for Latin America and Asia has risen to nearly 75 percent. Together, the increase in the level of immigration and the shift in the sources explain much of the change in the nation's racial and ethnic composition. In addition, immigrants are likely to have more children than native-born Americans. As we enter this millennium, the significant differences in composition not only of the nation, but of states and cities, should come as no surprise to anyone.

Will these shifts in the nation's racial and ethnic composition continue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? If immigration remains anywhere near its present level, and if the source countries remain the same, the answer clearly is yes (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1 Percent Distribution of U.S. Population by Racial/Ethnic Group, 2000–2050**

Year	Non-Hispanic White	Non-Hispanic Black	Non-Hispanic Asian & Other	Hispanic
2000	71.8	12.2	4.6	11.4
2010	68.0	12.7	5.5	13.8
2020	64.3	12.9	6.5	16.3
2030	60.5	13.1	7.5	18.9
2040	56.7	13.3	8.3	21.7
2050	52.8	13.6	9.1	24.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, P-25-1130 (1996).

According to the “middle” Census Bureau projections that serve as the basis for these data, the majority White population will be barely “the majority” by 2050 (52.8%). The Hispanic share, on the other hand, will more than double, from 11.4 to 24.5 percent. By about 2005, Hispanics will have surpassed African Americans as the largest minority in the nation. The Asian and Other share will also nearly double over the 50-year period. Drastic as these changes appear, they will be even more marked in certain local areas.

Numbers sometimes give a better description than do distribution percentages. Between 2000 and 2050, the White population will grow by only 11 million (from 197 to 208 million). Blacks will increase by 20 million (from 34 to 54 million). Asians (excluding Others) will triple in number (from 10 to 32 million). His-

panics will grow from 31 to 97 million over the 50-year period. By 2050, their numbers will be almost twice those of Blacks.

These almost incredible numerical differences reflect both the level of immigration and variations in fertility among the racial/ethnic groups that comprise the U.S. population. It is safe to predict that by 2050, the nation will scarcely resemble that of today, and some sections of the country will be affected by these changes far sooner than the nation as a whole.

Will these shifts in racial/ethnic composition continue after 2050? If we assume a continuation of the demographic patterns expected for the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the answer is an emphatic yes. Table 4.2 illustrates what could happen. Figure 4.1 summarizes the projected racial/ethnic distribution shifts over the period 2000–2100.

Percentage-wise, the long-time majority White population will become a minority group by 2060, at which time the nation will not have *any* “majority population.” Forty years later, Whites will comprise a mere *one-third* of the population of the United States! Both the Black and the Asian and Others groups will remain relatively stable, proportionately speaking, over this period. Blacks will comprise about 14 percent of the population, Asians and Others around 9 percent. The Hispanic population, however, will soar. In 2000, Hispanics are expected to make up a little less than one-

eighth of the nation's people. Fifty years later, that share will be up to one-quarter. By about 2085, Hispanics could outnumber Whites.

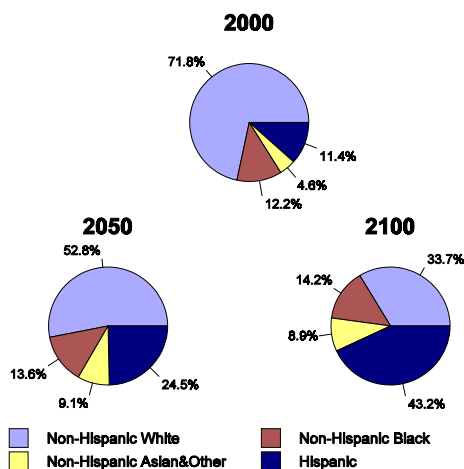
Numerically, the situation is equally striking. The long dominant White group will actually decrease in number in the last half of the century—from 208 million to 173 million. Blacks and Asians and Others will grow, but at moderate levels. Few Black immigrants are expected, and the fertility level of Asians is assumed to remain low (1.9). Hispanic numbers will soar in the second half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2050 they could total almost 97 million. By 2100, they might approach 223 million and be the largest group in the nation.

These percents and numbers may appear surreal; they are not. They simply describe the

**Table 4.2 Projected Racial/Ethnic Composition of the U.S., 2050–2100 (%)**

Year	Non-Hispanic White	Non-Hispanic Black	Non-Hispanic Asian & Other	Hispanic
2050	52.8	13.6	9.1	24.5
2060	47.9	14.1	9.7	28.3
2070	40.9	14.3	9.9	31.9
2080	40.2	14.4	9.8	35.6
2090	36.8	14.3	9.5	39.4
2100	33.7	14.2	8.9	43.2

Source: Projections based on U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, P-25-1130 (1996), assumptions for 2050.



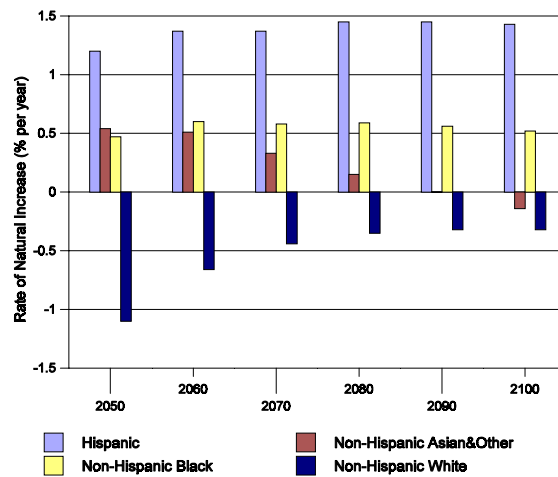
**Figure 4.1 Summary of Projected Racial/Ethnic Composition of the U.S., 2000, 2050, 2100**

Census Bureau mid-level projected population of the United States in the next century, if present patterns of fertility and migration (together with some minor increases in life expectancy) are maintained for another one hundred years (see Figure 4.2). To be sure, changes in our demographic behavior could take place. White fertility could rise, or it could fall further. The fertility of minority groups could vary. Hispanic fertility, for example, could decline even with continued high levels of immigration reflecting the encouraging signs of fertility reduction in Mexico. Immigration itself could be greatly reduced if Congress and the president had the courage to do so. I cannot guarantee that these projections will come to pass. I can say that we are heading in this direction, and unless something is done to alter our demographic behavior, the United States that enters the 22<sup>nd</sup> century will be totally unrecognizable from the United States that is entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

If the nation decides that this extraordinary shift in its makeup would be too abrupt and disruptive to social tranquility, is there anything that could be done to keep it from occurring? We could reduce immigration (both legal and illegal). We could try to induce immigrants and their children to have fewer children. If these recommendations are not followed, we may need to brace for radical new definitions of "America." There is increasing pressure to make Spanish an accepted language. For example, just recently in a small Texas border town, "the

mayor and city commissioners of El Cenizo approved an ordinance that requires all local government business to be transacted in Spanish . . . along with another municipal law that calls for firing any municipal employee who helps the Border Patrol apprehend illegal immigrants.”<sup>47</sup> There is mounting pressure to have our schools observe Muslim holy days. It is obvious that the nation is going through a catastrophic change. It is here that my oft-asked question, “Will we all get along?” is particularly meaningful.

**Personal Experiences:** *Anyone brought up in the northeast prior to World War II may remember that tensions among Whites were sometimes high. This was not a racial matter, but it might as well have been. In my hometown in eastern Connecticut, there were French-Canadians (I was one of them), Poles, Italians, Irish, Slavs and, of course, the hated (and rich!) WASPs. The French-Canadians were in the majority but the WASPs held all the prominent positions. The various ethnic groups kept apart and little mixing occurred. All this has changed and now hardly anyone is “pure anything” anymore—and that is all to the good, in my opinion.*



**Figure 4.2 Projected Rate of Natural Increase (% per year), 2050–2100**



## 5 AGE, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

I have discussed how shifts in our demographic behavior will change the nation's age composition in future years. "Will we all get along?" was asked. There may well be intergenerational problems, but we are talking about children and their parents and perhaps grandparents. Surely these problems, though troublesome, can be solved in a peaceful manner. I have discussed how shifts in our demographic behavior, especially immigration, will also pose serious problems for American unity. These problems will be especially disturbing, as the very definition of the nation may change. Here, I will

examine how the combination of age and racial/ethnic changes will present even more difficult problems for Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Table 5.1 Projected Population of the U.S. by Age and Racial/Ethnic Composition, 2000–2050 (% and 000s)**

Year	Hispanic	Asian/ Other	Black	White	Total
<b>Under Age 15</b>					
2000	16.0	5.3	15.1	63.6	58,972
2010	19.2	6.6	15.6	58.6	59,733
2020	22.4	7.5	15.8	54.3	64,858
2030	25.5	8.4	15.8	50.3	69,382
2040	28.5	9.2	16.1	46.2	73,893
2050	31.3	9.7	16.0	43.0	80,200
<b>Age 15–64</b>					
2000	11.1	4.7	12.1	72.1	180,960
2010	13.5	5.7	12.5	68.3	198,575
2020	16.3	6.8	13.0	63.9	204,660
2030	19.3	8.0	13.5	59.2	208,189
2040	21.9	8.9	13.8	55.4	220,856
2050	24.5	9.7	14.1	51.7	234,870
<b>Age 65 and Over</b>					
2000	5.4	2.7	8.0	83.9	34,709
2010	7.2	3.8	8.2	80.8	39,408
2020	8.9	4.5	8.7	77.9	53,220
2030	11.2	5.0	9.2	74.6	69,379
2040	14.4	6.0	9.3	70.3	75,233
2050	17.5	6.9	9.6	66.0	78,860

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports* P-25-1130 (1996).

First, it is important to realize that Whites are, on the average, "older" than the other racial/ethnic groups. In 2000, for example, almost 11 percent of Whites are 65 or older, compared to only 6 percent of Hispanics. Among Asians and Others, only 2.1 percent are elderly, and just over 8 percent of Blacks are 65 or over. These variations in age composition are attributable primarily to the higher level of immigration among Hispanics and Asians than among Whites and Blacks. Immigrants generally tend to be relatively young. In addition, among Hispanics, fertility is higher than average, contributing to a "younging" of that population.

Looking first at the people aged 65 and over in 2000, Whites are actually more numerous, percentage-wise, than they are in the overall population. Almost 84 percent of the elderly are Whites, compared to 71.8 percent of the entire population. Through 2050, Whites will retain their majority status, though the percentage will decrease. By 2050, only two-thirds of all elderly Americans will be Whites. The proportion of Blacks will expand slightly, from 8.0 to 9.6 percent. The rise among Hispanics and Asians and Others will be substantial—Hispanics will go from 5.4 to 17.5 percent, Asians and Others from 2.7 to 6.9 percent. Numerically, elderly White numbers will

climb from 35 to 52 million (the “senior” boom); elderly Hispanic numbers will rise from just under 2 million to almost 14 million (see Table 5.1 for details).

Turning to what some demographers call the “active” population (15–64), in 2000, the majority White group comprises over 72 percent of all individuals 15–64.<sup>48</sup> That share drops gradually and by mid-century, slightly more than half of the “active” population will be White. The Black share will increase somewhat, but that of Hispanics and Asians and Others more than doubles over the 50-year period between 2000 and 2050. Numerically, the “active” Hispanic population will *grow* from 20 to 58 million; the White group will *fall* from 130 to 121 million.

Major upheavals will also be noted in the population under age 15. In 2000, Whites make up 63.6 percent of that age group. Because of their projected relatively low fertility in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that proportion will fall to 43 percent by 2050.

The latter half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century promises even more of a transformation if present demographic patterns are maintained (see Table 5.2). I must reemphasize that these projected numbers simply indicate what would happen *if* these patterns do not change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Educated by these projections, public officials can examine their options and choose whether to continue making these dramatic demographic changes. If the choice is to continue with no change in our demographic behavior, we must anticipate what would take place.

Beginning with the elderly group, as noted earlier, Whites would constitute two-thirds of the population in 2050. By 2080, they would no longer be the majority, and by the turn of the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, Whites would constitute 41 percent of all people aged 65 and over. In the same period, the proportion of all other groups would increase. In particular, the Hispanic and Asian and Others shares would double.

The picture for the group 15–64 is similar. Whites’ share would fall from 52 percent in 2050 to 35 percent in 2100. The shares of Asians and Others and of Blacks would not vary much over that 50-

**Table 5.2 Projected Population of the U.S. by Age and Racial/Ethnic Composition, 2050–2100 (% and 000s)**

Year	Hispanic	Asian/ Other	Black	White	Total
<b>Under Age 15</b>					
2050	31.3	9.7	16.0	43.0	80,200
2060	36.6	9.1	15.9	38.4	86,410
2070	40.9	8.5	15.7	34.9	92,490
2080	45.1	7.7	15.3	31.9	98,940
2090	49.6	6.9	15.0	28.5	107,720
2100	53.5	6.2	14.5	25.8	116,930
<b>Age 15–64</b>					
2050	24.5	9.7	14.1	51.7	234,870
2060	27.5	10.2	14.5	47.8	246,380
2070	30.7	10.3	14.7	44.3	262,500
2080	34.2	10.1	14.8	40.9	279,660
2090	37.8	9.6	14.8	37.8	297,980
2100	41.8	9.0	14.6	34.6	317,570
<b>Age 65 and Over</b>					
2050	17.5	6.9	9.6	66.0	78,860
2060	20.7	8.6	10.8	59.9	70,640
2070	24.5	10.3	11.3	53.9	68,020
2080	27.8	11.6	11.7	48.9	70,190
2090	30.9	12.3	11.9	44.9	74,170
2100	34.0	12.4	12.2	41.4	80,040

Source: L. Bouvier, based on U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports* P–25–1130 (1996).

year period, however, Hispanics would catch up to and pass Whites by 2090. By 2100, the Hispanic share of this “active” population would be 42 percent, compared to 35 percent for Whites.

The White share of the young (0–14) age group would dwindle considerably in the second half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century—from 43 percent to less than 26 percent of that population.

***“The shifts in age and racial/ethnic composition that could occur in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are almost too stunning to contemplate.”***

The Black share would decrease slightly, as would that for Asians and Others. The Hispanic share would grow enormously—from 31 percent to almost 54 percent in the 50-year period. Hispanics would outnumber

Whites by the year 2065. By 2100 the respective totals would be 63 million for Hispanics and 30 million for Whites.

The shifts in age and racial/ethnic composition that could occur in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are almost too stunning to contemplate. Perhaps the level of immigration will be reduced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps fertility among certain minorities will be reduced. Given what is happening throughout the world, with fertility falling in numerous countries, including Mexico, it is possible. However, it would be unwise to count on that happening in the United States in the near future. One conclusion is almost certain: short of cataclysmic shifts in our demographic behavior, the United States is heading in the direction described in these chapters. It is our duty to prepare ourselves for these shifts. The question, “Will we all get along?” becomes more important than ever.

**Personal Experiences:** *Age differences and attitudes about race are particularly noticeable in social situations. An African-American friend and I often frequent local restaurants, theaters, and shopping malls. Inevitably, we note that elderly White individuals are more likely to show disdain on this “interracial couple” than are Black and younger White people who, for the most part, ignore us completely. To me this reflects the differences that exist between the young and the old, and between Whites and non-Whites. As the nation becomes older and more diverse, such variations in attitude may well sharpen age and race divisions.*

## 6 WILL WE ALL [*REALLY*] GET ALONG?

Some form of interaction naturally results when two groups meet. This is true whether it is young meeting old, Whites meeting Blacks, or Blacks meeting Browns. In all cases, both groups must adapt to a new situation. In this chapter, I am mainly concerned with interethnic and interracial meetings. Thus, I have “borrowed” the title of the book for this chapter. As we saw in the last chapter, the United States is becoming a nation of many races and ethnic groups. Eventually no specific group will be in the majority. Will these groups get along?

Immigration has been (and continues to be) the prime contributor to this growing melange of racial groups. Indeed, humans have faced the challenges of group adaptation ever since migration began thousands, if not millions of years ago. Here in the United States, some form of adaptation has taken place whenever new groups of immigrants arrived. The process will be repeated as long as immigration to the United States persists.

### Cultural Adaptation Processes

There are different ways to adapt to a situation involving group interaction. At one extreme—cultural *separatism*—newcomers are socially isolated from the resident group either through their own volition or through segregationist practices by the host group. At the other extreme—cultural *amalgamation*—a new society and culture results from massive intermarriage between the two groups.

Between these extremes are *pluralism*, *assimilation*, and the so-called “*melting pot*.” In pluralism, a society allows its constituted ethnic groups to develop, each emphasizing its particular cultural heritage. Assimilation assumes that new groups will take on the culture and values of the host society and gradually discard their own heritage. In the melting pot, the host and immigrant groups share each other’s cultures and in the process, a new group emerges. The melting pot (or as it has evolved, into a “salad bowl” or even a “mosaic” or “cauldron”) differs from pure assimilation. While early advocates of the melting pot theory encouraged newcomers to “assimilate” into American society, the society they envisaged was not intended to be totally dominated by Anglo-Saxons, but was, rather, a new community formed by the blending of the various groups, albeit with strong Anglo-Saxon influence.

***“What type of cultural adaptation is appropriate for a rapidly changing racially mixed society?”***

Throughout American history, immigrants as well as residents have had to adjust to each other. A process of cultural adaptation was necessary if the society was to survive. Today the question is: What type of cultural adaptation is appropriate for a rapidly changing racially mixed society?

### Assimilation vs. Pluralism

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Anglo-American majority favored the total assimilation of new European groups into an Anglo-dominated society. (It was taken for granted—indeed it was ordained—that Mexicans, Asians, and Blacks would remain culturally separate.) “Americanization”

was in full vogue during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was assumed that all new European immigrants would become “Americanized,” and Anglo-conformity was to be encouraged for all new immigrants. Cultural pluralism and even the melting pot were adamantly opposed.

Aligned against total assimilation were the cultural pluralists, who urged a new type of nation in which various national groups would preserve their identities and their cultures, uniting as a world federation in miniature.<sup>49</sup> Horace Kallen argued vehemently against assimilation and the melting pot, stating that if the course of cultural pluralism were followed, “the outlines of a possible great and truly democratic commonwealth become discernable. Its form would be that of a federal republic; its substance a democracy of nationalities, cooperating voluntarily and autonomously through common institutions in the enterprise of self-realization through the perfection of men according to their kind.”<sup>50</sup>

## Melting Pot

This theory was a compromise between the extremes of pluralism and assimilation. In one sense, the melting pot is a type of assimilation, in that the emphasis is on the formation of an American culture. Its determination not to overemphasize Anglo-conformity makes it a different kind of assimilation than that advocated by the “Americanization” movement.

Distinctive of the melting-pot ideology was the emphasis . . . on a fusion of cultures, rather than the wholesale acceptance by many different nationalities of the culture of a single one of them. But still the basic idea of assimilation remained: There was to be an *American* culture, however it came about, and immigrants and their children were to accept it, even as they also made some contribution to it.<sup>51</sup>

## Recent Patterns of Cultural Adaptation

As I look back over the past century at how the cultural adaptation process developed among those of European ancestry, it is clear that the pressures to “Americanize” everyone through total assimilation did not entirely succeed. Most European groups retained some semblance of ethnicity over the years while at the same time adapting to new surroundings.

Neither has cultural pluralism been particularly notable among European immigrants and their descendants. If cultural pluralism means that various groups maintain separatism from each other, creating the possibility of also maintaining cultural patterns different from those of the host society, then the evidence suggests that this form of cultural

***“. . . it is clear that the pressures to “Americanize” everyone through total assimilation did not entirely succeed.”***

adaptation has not succeeded among most Americans of European ancestry.

By the 1980s, however, the melting pot had worked quite well for immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, though it may be working in a different way than had been anticipated. In addition to different groups acting increasingly alike, a new population is forming—the “unhyphenated” Americans.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, the power elite, historically almost exclusively White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP), was being replaced by one in which persons of non-WASP heritage were commonplace.

It has taken several generations for the melting pot to become a “cauldron” (in the words of

geographer William Clark), but by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, major changes had taken place among Americans of European ancestry. A second generation Italian, Lee Iacocca, reached the top of the business world as head of one of the country's top automobile manufacturers. A. Bartlett Giamatti served as president of Yale University, and later, the commissioner of baseball. Both the adviser to President Reagan, John Sununu, and the former Democratic leader of the U.S. Senate, George Mitchell, are of Arabic background. Former Secretary of Commerce and author Peter Petersen is a second-generation Greek. In 1968, for the first time in United States history, both vice-presidential candidates were second-generation Americans: Edmund Muskie (of Polish ancestry) and Spiro Agnew (of Greek heritage).

While little has been written about this adaptation process, it remains one of the great successes of American democracy. Indeed, today Americans of British descent are but a minority of the European-Americans in our nation.

***“Soon there may be no majority in which to assimilate or minorities upon which to confer affirmative action benefits.”***

Of course, we must be wary of exaggeration. While the melting pot may have worked among those of European ancestry, it is questionable how well it is working among non-Whites although here, too, we can cite individuals like Colin Powell and Daniel Inouye as examples of success. At any rate, within the nation's majority population of European ancestry, the nation has come a long way. As historian Stephen Thernstrom has remarked: “What is surprising—indeed, rather amazing—in global perspective, is not the diversity but the speed and thoroughness with which these groups blended together and became absorbed in a common national culture.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Cultural Adaptation Processes Today**

Can the relative success among persons of European background, achieved over a good part of the 20th century, be duplicated with the current and future mix of racially diverse groups? The question of how the United States will maintain a unified nation out of peoples from all over the world is one that can not be ignored. A repetition of the successful melting pot process is unlikely, given the situation today as compared to that a century ago. The differences in economic structure, the possibilities of interracial marriages, the increasing emphasis on group rights, and particularly the level of immigration, are far too great to envision a new interracial (rather than interethnic) melting pot in the foreseeable future. What, then, are the alternatives?

Hopefully cultural separatism is a thing of the past, though a few still favor such a process. Some Hispanic irredentists dream of a new Spanish-speaking southwest as a way demographically to take back what the United States took 150 years ago. And there are always a few segregationists who would dearly love to keep all races separate and “in their places.”

Cultural assimilation is unlikely insofar as it means the complete surrender of immigrants' symbols and values, and their absorption by the core culture. Soon there may be no majority in which to assimilate or minorities upon which to confer affirmative action benefits. The choices lie between cultural pluralism and a new mode of adaptation that I call *pluralistic assimilation*. The direction the nation follows will determine the kind of America that will evolve in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A benign form of cultural pluralism has long been a part of American life in the form of ethnic enclaves that are still present in large cities. But recently a harder-edged version of cultural pluralism has emerged. The focus is on a contention that the United States is a compact between what some are

beginning to lump together as a “Euro-American” population and a limited set of minority groups, made up principally of African Americans, Native Americans, Asians, and Hispanics.<sup>54</sup>

Today, cultural pluralism (or multiculturalism as it is now called) is favored by some scholars and politicians. In this case, demography plays an important role. With the advent of a society where no single group is assured majority status, there are those who argue that

the separateness of ethnic groups will work to empower the totality. Thus, the way in which pluralism is accommodated is as important as the confrontation between assimilation and pluralism. The recent emphasis on ethnicity and diversity, then, may be viewed as a long-overdue recognition of the role of minorities in the forging of American culture.<sup>55</sup>

Economist John Isbister suggests that “it will be easier for us to transform a society of hostility and oppression into one of cooperation if we are dealing not with a majority versus several small minorities, but with groups of roughly equivalent size.”<sup>56</sup>

The debate between assimilation and pluralism continues to this day. “[N]on-European groups have assimilated slowly, if at all and this lack of assimilation has raised questions about the effectiveness of assimilation for integrating different races and ethnicities into the larger American society.”<sup>57</sup> Nathan Glazer sides with multiculturalism—that is, a society to be defined by the choices of the varying Asian, Middle Eastern, and African groups.<sup>58</sup> “[Glazer] suggests that their support for bilingual education and for foreign-language rights suggests a tendency to multiculturalism and may even portend a resistance to assimilation.”<sup>59</sup>

***“The challenge . . . is to find a way to ensure that all . . . residents, regardless of background, have equal access to opportunities for success and . . . adapt to American culture while contributing to its ever-changing content.”***

These are compelling arguments, however the conclusions are optimistic and even utopian. Rather than four or five separate but equal groups, I suspect that coalitions would soon be formed in the service of competing better, not cooperating with other groups. Such coalitions would then constitute a “majority” as is the case in countries with several political parties vying for leadership in a parliamentary

system of government. Furthermore, I know of no precedent anywhere in the world where truly multi-racial populations have had successful democratic national governments or even social systems. Indeed, the opposite may be nearer to reality. Thus, while these arguments should be taken seriously, there is no evidence that they would work.

It is important to distinguish between cultural pluralism and a pluralistic nation. The United States is pluralistic in the sense that it has many religions and ethnic and racial groups represented in its population. Yet, it has constantly strived to achieve overall unity in its basic interests and ideals. *E Pluribus Unum* succinctly describes the “ideal” American nation. If cultural pluralism was supplemental to these common interests and ideals, it would be appropriate. As presently conceived, however, cultural pluralism argues for the primacy of the homeland language and culture. Such a mode of adaptation is not the most attractive direction, if the nation strives for unity rather than disunity in a new demographic situation where eventually, no single group will be able to call itself the majority.

### Pluralistic Assimilation<sup>60</sup>

The challenge to the United States is to find a way to assure that all its residents, regardless of background, have equal access to opportunities for success and in the process, adapt to American culture while contributing to its ever-changing content. All its residents must have the choice of maintaining their own subculture within the broader American society. As the nation becomes more multiracial, it is particularly important that cultural adaptation takes the best of cultural pluralism and assimilation, while time maintaining the American culture and assuring its acceptance by all.

In his recent (1998) book, geographer William Clark asked the question, “To what extent will the new immigrant groups follow the old patterns of ‘integration’? Or will a new model of pluralism be constructed, in which groups maintain their racial and ethnic identities but are integrated into the larger social and political society?”<sup>61</sup> While these goals may be somewhat antithetical, pluralistic assimilation could be the answer. It is particularly suitable for multiracial societies where no one group predominates. It differs from pluralism in that allegiance is to the nation first and the group second. It differs from assimilation in that the racial group maintains its identity, if it so desires. Admittedly, this is a difficult goal to attain. Yet, if the American “way of life” is emphasized, it is possible.

The term “assimilation” is used rather than “integration.” The difference can be illustrated by an example from professional sports. In 1947, Jackie Robinson became a Brooklyn

***“. . . [pluralistic assimilation] is particularly suitable for multiracial societies where no one group predominates.”***

Dodger and big league baseball was integrated. But true assimilation did not take place for many more years. Only in 1977, when the Cleveland Indians fired Black Manager Frank Robinson for his failure to win more games, could it be claimed that big league baseball was becoming pluralistically assimilated. By then, firing a minority person was acceptable. With the selection of Bill White, a Black American, as president of the National League in 1989, the pluralistic assimilation process accelerated. Integration is almost ceremonial; assimilation involves becoming a true member of the *whole* system, for better and for worse.

Pluralistic assimilation also serves to provide some heterogeneity within ever-increasing homogeneity, that is to say, the major racial groups remain identifiable. As T.S. Eliot once wrote: “A people should be neither too united nor too divided if its culture is to flourish.”<sup>62</sup> The trend toward homogeneity may perhaps succeed. Yet, within most societies and most groups, a certain reluctance can be seen. While embracing homogeneity, some groups express a desire to maintain some awareness of their roots. “The more homogeneous our lifestyles become, the more steadfastly we shall cling to deeper values—religion, language, art, and literature. As our outer worlds grow more similar, we will increasingly treasure the traditions that spring from within.”<sup>63</sup>

Earlier pressures for “Americanization” ignored this important point. New immigrants were expected to shed their old culture and willingly embrace Anglo-conformity. It didn’t work any better than cultural pluralism, which argued for the opposite position. Pluralistic assimilation allows for limited diversity within a unified nation that is becoming multiracial and where someday no racial majority will exist.

An analogy may help further to explain pluralistic assimilation. For many decades, most European Americans lived under an Anglo-conformity umbrella. While minorities such as Blacks, Hispanics,



Native Americans, and Asians were kept “out in the rain” so to speak, European Americans gradually gained acceptance and began sharing the umbrella. What had been an Anglo-conformity umbrella had become a truly European-American umbrella. In the meantime, minority populations increased and demands for equal rights were loud. However, there was no room under the umbrella, so a tent became necessary. Here all groups could stay out of the rain and participate in the social system. Yet, a tent can only stand if the various poles are properly attached to the ground at various places. These ties are provided by the various racial and ethnic groups: European, Asian, African, Hispanic, and Native American.

A pole in the center is still required. That would be the *American* base that has always been the principal source of our culture irrespective of ethnic, religious, or racial changes. The definition of “American” changes (as it often has in the past), but the precepts remain the same. All other poles will be equal, but the basic concept of the United States will be represented by the middle pole. To be truly American, members of the various groups must accept the basic principles of American society—equal justice under the law, fair representation, rights for all—in other words, all must accept the

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***“The definition of ‘American’ changes (as it often has in the past), but the precepts remain the same.”***

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Constitution and the Declaration of Independence as the core values of the emerging multiracial society. This can and should be accepted by all groups. Whites have no monopoly on this political philosophy.

A number of factors must be present for pluralistic assimilation to work.

First, society must provide the means to make economic and social advancement or failure equally possible for *all* Americans. This involves universal access to higher education as well as technical training. It necessitates a revamping of the nation’s educational institutions to allow for the better preparation of *all* Americans for the occupations of the future—a “GI Bill” for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In other words, a new kind of structural mobility—up or down—that is appropriate for the economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, must be developed. Should these plans fail and Blacks and Hispanics find themselves overwhelmingly in lower-paying jobs, while Asians and Whites are predominantly in higher-paying positions, conflict is inevitable, and pluralistic assimilation will fail.

Second, future immigrants must demonstrate their desire to join other Americans and become “one of us.” This is crucially important. Just as most early 20<sup>th</sup>-century immigrants desperately wanted to become American, so too should those of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. If *E Pluribus Unum* is to remain our goal, there can be no room for cultural separatism or for irredentist movements on the part of newcomers. As Nathan Glazer puts it so elegantly: “We want people to become Americans . . . out of love, not calculation.”<sup>64</sup> One of the best ways to show this desire is not only through naturalization, but through a sincere willingness to learn the English language and American history and culture—to literally become “one of us.” Sad to say, far too many recent immigrants to the United States do not exhibit this desire. Somehow, this must change if pluralistic assimilation is to succeed.

Third, all forms of discrimination, both for and against, based on race, religion, or ethnicity, must end. This is an enormous challenge, but a true meritocracy must evolve where affirmative action programs are unnecessary. Much of the social behavior of all Americans must change if pluralistic assimilation is to succeed. Americans rightly have expressed their abhorrence at “ethnic cleansing” in the Balkans, yet we have long tolerated “ethnic profiling” by police in numerous cities and states.

This must end. If pluralistic assimilation is truly the goal, Americans must not think of the newest immigrants as “foreigners.” The *limited* number of newcomers should be accepted wholeheartedly. Every effort should be made to assist the newest residents to participate fully and equally in our dynamic society. With the immigrants’ share of the population growing, it is vital to the survival of the society that a mechanism be found for all groups to know and understand each other.

Fourth, while the major racial groups will remain identifiable, all residents of the United States must learn to respect and appreciate each other simply as fellow Americans. For pluralistic assimilation to succeed, a stronger national community must emerge, and the United States as a nation-state must do everything to ensure its continued unity through emphasis on language and patriotism. This approach should be encouraged in our schools, our churches, and at all levels of government. Let’s not fear patriotism—let’s encourage it.

Fifth and extremely important, levels of immigration must be substantially reduced. The host nation cannot withstand massive hordes anxious to enter. Immigration must be slow and gradual. Only in this way will the newest immigrants become part of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century American society as White ethnic minorities became a part of the majority earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As will be discussed in more detail later, all previous immigration waves eventually receded; that is why they are called “waves.” During the 1920s and 1930s, immigration practically came to an end, allowing new immigrants more time to adjust to their new surroundings. This was a major factor in the successful assimilation of non-WASPs into mainstream society. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it made possible the assimilation of Catholics and Jews into what had been a predominantly Protestant nation. As the nation becomes more diverse, it is vital that it keep its identity. A major reduction, or even a temporary moratorium in immigration would accelerate the assimilation of the newest residents. Below, I will suggest shifts in future demographic behavior that could contribute to reduced population growth and limited diversity.

I must be clear about one important matter: Chauvinism is not called for, but in light of the potential hazards to the nature of our society from uncontrolled immigration and a weakened concept of citizenship, policy makers cannot afford to neglect the larger question of the national interest while attempting to placate competing interest groups.<sup>65</sup> A determined effort to assure the success of pluralistic assimilation is the most appropriate route to follow if the nation is to remain *E Pluribus Unum*.

***“For pluralistic assimilation to succeed, a stronger national community must emerge.”***

Finally, *all* individuals must become involved with each other if we are to “get along” in a more densely populated and more diversified United States. It seems to me that civility has reached a new low in recent years. “Mine” seems to have become a magic word. We read of automobile accidents caused by a lack of decency; the same is true on airlines where flight attendants are in increasing danger of being harassed by angry passengers. On a broader level, hatred and bigotry (which, sad to say, have always been around) are probably more prevalent than ever, for the simple reason that now there are more people to hate than there were a century ago. We are beginning to feel crowded. Something is definitely wrong with our interactions—between individuals and between groups.

On one hand, pluralistic assimilation seems doable. It is merely an extension of the cultural adaptation in the 20th century among European ethnic groups, which was an admirable success. On the other hand, now we are dealing with identifiable racial groups. The best intentions will fail if we

do not control intergroup relations. Increased levels of interracial marriages will ease the difficulties somewhat, but unless we learn to accept the fact that we, as a nation, will be thoroughly interracial, and unless we find a way to control interracial relationships, any kind of cultural adaptation process is bound to fail.

What can be done? I have three suggestions: Love, forgiveness, and civility.

In any language, “love” is a beautiful word—*amour*, *lieber*, *amore*, etc. Now it is time to really put it into practice. “Love Thy Neighbor” should be our motto for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Bear in mind that we will soon reach 300 million people. If all 300 million of us begin to care and truly love each other, our biggest problems will be solved. Even our political parties will have to “get along.”

Forgiveness is closely related to love. Let’s forgive one another for past grievances—whether on the individual or the group level. Let’s forget the past and live for now and the future. Does skin color really make a difference? Should variations in religious beliefs affect relationships? Let’s move on, overlooking past differences, and forgive and forget.

Let’s start being more civil with each other. Civility seems to have gone out of style. I suggest that

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***“Will we all get along? . . . [the] answer depends on how we adapt to one another in the 21st century . . .”***

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we say “Thank You” more often. I suggest that we smile at strangers and wish them a good day. I suggest that we drive more politely and patiently. This kind of behavior may catch on and all of us will be the better for it. Civility might be the magic behavior that could lead us to a better under-

standing of each other—individuals as well as groups—in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To paraphrase the words of former boxing great, Mohammed Ali: Kindness to others is the rent we pay for our time on earth.

But how does such a message reach all Americans? We must go all out to make this succeed, through our major social institutions: family, education, religion, government, and the economy. It could begin in the home, reinforced in school, and our many religions could play a very strong role in spreading the message of love, forgiveness, and civility. Governments at all levels of society could follow the example set by individuals and groups. Finally, even our economic system could stand some improvement in relationships.

## How Are We Doing?

Is the glass half full or is it half empty? Optimistically, I feel that it is half full. We are already on our way toward pluralistic assimilation. This is not to deny the numerous indignities suffered by all groups—White, Black, Asian, or Hispanic. Such indignities can no longer be tolerated and for the most part, they are not. Numerous minority celebrities are becoming icons to people of all races: basketball superstar Michael Jordan, golf star Tiger Woods (a self-defined ‘Cablinasian’), Oprah Winfrey, or Ed Bradley of “Sixty Minutes.” Most Americans don’t even consider color when discussing these celebrities. This is a step toward pluralistic assimilation. Increasingly, in the business world, we see persons of Hispanic or Asian background. We see more and more African Americans in high-level positions. Something is beginning to happen to our society and it is all to the good. “Will we all get along?” That question will linger for a long time. Its answer depends on how we adapt to

one another in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and whether we alter personal behavior as well as future demographic patterns. Do we adjust the definition of “what is an American” as we have time and again over the past three centuries? If the answer is “yes,” then we are on the right track. If we refuse to accept that changes will occur, then the nation is in trouble.

But the glass could also be half empty if we allow the rapid changes occurring in the racial/ethnic composition of the nation to continue at their present speed. We are simply moving too fast in the direction of total diversity. A “slowing down” is imperative if pluralistic assimilation is to succeed. Diversity is already an ingredient in American society. How much diversity can be tolerated before apartheid occurs?

We are not there yet. Much more needs to be done. Hispanics continue to do poorly in school with far too many dropouts. Blacks are still subjected to discrimination, overtly as well as covertly. Asians who speak perfect English are still looked at in some wonderment. Native Americans, despite the success of casinos in some states, remain the poorest of the poor.

***“ . . . if we really want to, we can become the first truly successful multiracial nation in history.”***

And the shift in the nation’s racial/ethnic composition is far too rapid.

Yet I feel that we are on our way and have been for some time. Within racial groups, interethnic marriages have been prevalent for decades. Today, few young White adults can actually state that they are “pure Italian” or “pure Polish” or whatever. Whites have successfully melded into a White American (or “nonhyphenated”) ethnic group. Interracial marriages are on the increase and becoming commonplace and more accepted in our society, so much so that the 2000 census is restructuring its questions to allow mixed-race persons to identify themselves as such. The aforementioned golfer, Tiger Woods, is a good example of this new type of “mixing.” While it may be some time before we become a “tea-colored” society such as author Philip Wylie predicted many years ago, if we really want to, we can become the first truly successful multiracial nation in history. This may be “wishful thinking” on my part. Given the demographic reality, we must think positively.

**Personal Experiences:** *In my own family, my late spouse was half Irish and half French-Canadian. One of my grandsons is  $\frac{3}{8}$  French-Canadian,  $\frac{1}{8}$  Irish,  $\frac{1}{4}$  Greek, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  WASP. One of my granddaughters, who is also of “mixed” background, is married to a Cape Verdian and they have a child. Thus, both interethnic and interracial marriages are prevalent in my family.*

## 7 IS THERE A DEMOGRAPHIC SOLUTION?

I may be begging the question, “solution to what?” Since we cannot do much about our looming age composition problems, I am referring more to population size and to the racial/ethnic configuration of our nation.

Recall that according to the “medium” Census Bureau projections, the United States population will grow from 275 million to 394 million between 2000 and 2050. (In this chapter I will limit myself to exploring these next 50 years. The 2050–2100 period is far too tenuous to analyze in any depth.) As discussed earlier, the racial/ethnic composition of the nation is destined to change substantially between 2000 and 2050. By mid-century, according to the medium Census Bureau projections, Whites will comprise just over half of the nation’s population (52.8%) while Hispanics will be second (24.5%), followed by Blacks (13.6%), and Asians and Others (9.1%). We also know that both population growth and racial/ethnic diversity will continue after 2050. It has often been said (not by demographers!) that “Demography is Destiny.” The numbers suggest that may be the case, but can demographic behavior *alter* that destiny?

***“ . . . the racial/ethnic composition of the nation is destined to change substantially between 2000 and 2050.”***

The Census Bureau projections used in this report include a number of alternative scenarios that illustrate what could happen under different demographic assumptions. Three distinct conjectures (“low,” “medium,” and “high”) have been prepared for

each of the demographic variables. From these we can develop ideas as to how shifts in demographic behavior might affect the future size and composition of the nation. Throughout this report, I have used the Census Bureau’s (1996) middle series projections. To summarize the assumptions:

- 1) Fertility is held constant for all groups, but since the proportional size of the groups varies over time, the result is a gain in overall fertility from 2.0 to 2.2.
- 2) Life expectancy is expected to rise overall from 75.9 to 82.0 years between 1995 and 2050.
- 3) Medium net migration is set at 820,000 per year (350,000 Hispanic, 186,000 Non-Hispanic White, 57,000 Non-Hispanic Black, and 227,000 Non-Hispanic Asian and Other).

These assumptions led to the figures cited above for 2050.

Now, thanks to the Census Bureau’s excellent publication, I will illustrate what might happen under different scenarios. Our goals are to: (1) arrive at a lower 2050 population than the 394 million projected under the middle series, and (2) arrive at less diversity by 2050 than under the middle series. Table 7.1 below summarizes the results and the assumptions are then explained.

Looking first at eventual population size, the “lowest” scenario appears at first glance to be quite attractive. However, this projection assumes a slight fall in life expectancy—for males, from 72.1 in 2000 to 70.9 in 2050, and for females from 79.2 to 78.8, which is unacceptable. Every effort should be made to *increase*, not *decrease*, longevity for all humans, providing such increase reflects quality, and not quantity. Thus, the lowest scenario is not considered any further. We must also realize that lowering (or raising) fertility is easier said than done. It involves changing the basic habits of married

couples, and would necessitate a wider distribution of contraceptives (as well as a strong public relations program). It could be done, but with considerable difficulty and controversy. Yet, the White fertility rate is already below the replacement level. There is no reason not to expect minority groups to lower their fertility as well. But fertility reduction cannot be done by fiat, so the most realistic solution to overpopulation lies in levels of immigration. Changes can be made in the number of immigrants accepted in any year by legislative action (and executive approval).

**Table 7.1 Alternative Projection Scenarios for the U.S., 2000–2050 (% and 000s)**

Date and Scenario	Non-Hispanic White	Non-Hispanic Black	Non-Hispanic Asian & Other	Hispanic	2050 Population (000s)
2000 Middle	71.8	12.2	4.6	11.4	274,634
2050 Middle	52.8	13.6	9.1	24.5	393,931
2050 No Mig*	60.6	15.4	5.3	18.7	314,085
2050 Low Mig*	55.9	14.6	7.4	22.1	351,354
2050 High Mig*	50.2	12.8	10.5	26.4	438,299
2050 Low Fert*	53.3	13.1	9.4	24.2	345,952
2050 Lowest*	55.8	14.2	8.0	22.0	282,524

\* Note: In all these scenarios, the other variables are always the middle assumptions (e.g., low migration is combined with middle fertility and middle life expectancy). For the “lowest” scenario, the low assumptions are used for all three demographic variables.

The two most appealing options appear to be either “zero migration” or annual migration of 300,000. The former is unrealistic, given the current (and undoubtedly future) attitudes of both the Democratic and Republican parties. However, reducing annual immigration to 300,000 seems quite reasonable, since prior to the 1965 legislation, that was about the number of people admitted in any given year. The population in 2050 would be just above 350 million. With lower levels of immigration, post-2000 immigrants might more readily adopt new customs and their family sizes might be reduced. Hispanic fertility in particular could fall, especially in light of recent declines in Mexico and other Latin American countries. Such a development would reduce the future population of the nation even more. Admittedly, this projection does not take into account illegal movements. Nor does it consider emigration *out* of the country. Perhaps these two would cancel each other out if stringent measures were taken to reduce illegal movements. Beyond 2050, the population would still rise, though at a slow pace. It would be presumptuous for us to make suggestions at this time for the policy makers fifty years hence!

It is fascinating that the proportion of Whites in 2050 varies only slightly between net migration of 300,000 (55.9%) and 820,000 (52.8%).<sup>66</sup> Even with zero net migration, the majority share rises only to 60.6%<sup>67</sup>—quite a drop from 71.8% in 2000. This is because the White fertility rate is below that needed to replace the population. Earlier, I pointed out that between 2000 and 2050, the White population would only increase by 11 million; soon after 2050, it could begin a gradual numerical decline. As long as the majority’s fertility is below replacement and that of some of the minorities is above replacement, the share of the majority in the total population will fall. Raising fertility might result in

a greater proportion of the population; it would also mean a massive increase in size—which is unthinkable.

The low migration scenario (i.e., 300,000) is therefore the ideal model to follow. By 2050, Whites would still comprise a majority of the population (55.9%), Hispanics 22.1 percent, Blacks 14.6 percent, Asians and Others 7.4 percent. What does all this mean? Perhaps nothing. As John Isbister has written,

The big question . . . is whether the racial categories that seem so important to us at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will have anything like the same relevance several generations from now. Will anyone care what the numbers are in these particular columns? Perhaps not. Perhaps intermarriage will blur the racial boundaries so much that they become indistinguishable.<sup>68</sup>

Such large numbers of interracial marriages seem rather farfetched at this time. However, by 2050, the percentage of the U.S. population that claims mixed ancestry—meaning some combination of Black, White, Hispanic, and Asian—will likely triple, to 21 percent. Even if racial distinctions were blurred, other characteristics such as religious differences and economic status could become sources of dispute.

***“The big question . . . is whether the racial categories that seem so important . . . will have anything like the same relevance several generations from now.”***

This brings us back to pluralistic assimilation. The entire notion of “American” has changed since colonial times—to a considerable extent, because of shifts in the composition of the population. People came, at various times, from almost everywhere on earth, but until recently, most came

from Europe. These waves of immigrants radically changed American society.

The first such wave was the flow of thousands of English, Spanish, and other Europeans to what eventually became the United States. The Native-American group, of distant Asian ancestry, was overwhelmed by the immigrants. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans—English, Dutch, and Swedish in the east, and a few Spaniards in the west—dominated the region which was to become the United States of America. Additionally, millions of Africans were brought as indentured servants into the southern states to make plantation agriculture more profitable.

A second wave began around 1840, when Irish and German immigrants entered the country in large numbers. This wave generated hostilities between the newcomers and the earlier immigrants, evidenced by discrimination against Catholics and Jews. This immigration changed the country from a basically Anglo-Saxon Protestant nation to one that included diverse religions.

The third wave began around 1880 and continued until World War I. Over those 35 years some 20 million Europeans, mostly from the southern and eastern parts of that continent, came to America. In addition, Chinese and Japanese immigrants arrived in the western states. Most of the European newcomers were Catholic or Jewish and spoke no English; many were poor and illiterate. The impact of these newcomers was tremendous. Confrontations between residents and newcomers were numerous, and contributed to restrictionist sentiments and laws in the 1920s that limited immigration from eastern and southern Europe and ended immigration from Asia. White America was becoming heterogeneous, but Anglo-Saxons remained the majority.

A fourth wave of immigration began shortly after the passage of the 1965 legislation and continues today.<sup>69</sup> This “wave” consists of about one million immigrants annually. They come mainly from Latin America and Asia, with a growing number coming from the Middle East. Some arrive legally, but many slip across U.S. borders without visas or do not leave the United States as scheduled. With the passage of legislation in 1990 designed to *raise* immigration levels, the number of legal and illegal immigrants will easily surpass one million per year for the foreseeable future, unless the federal government does an about face and places restrictions on these international movements.

These four movements of immigrants define what America is now. Over the past three centuries, the nation has changed as it adapted itself to newcomers. Each of the first three waves subsided after a period of time. These “breathers” contributed to the

***“Diversity within a unified nation can keep the United States an open society.”***

successful adaptation of each ensuing wave to American society. However, the present fourth “wave” shows no sign of receding, making adaptation more difficult.

It is critical to the future of the United States that this fourth “wave,” like its predecessors, abate as soon as possible. Indeed, a moratorium on immigration for perhaps five or ten years might be the best approach, but is highly unlikely given the political climate in Washington. I repeat my recommendation that immigration be limited to 300,000 per year, for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, newcomers to our shores should be carefully selected for their potential ability to contribute to the betterment of the nation and for their willingness to truly become “one of us.”

Is there a “demographic” solution? Yes, if Americans want to accept these recommendations. Can we all get along? Yes, if we act wisely (demographically) and are willing to give it a try as individuals. The United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can truly reflect the motto, *E Pluribus Unum*. Diversity within a unified nation can keep the United States an open society.

**Personal Experiences:** *As a college professor, I have often been asked by students: “Well, how many children do YOU have, professor?” I had to answer: “Four including twins.” Then I quickly explained that my beloved spouse and I were parents during the “baby boom” era. Four was normal. As for our children, they too followed the demographic model of the United States—each had two offspring, about the average for the “baby bust” generation. I must refrain from “projecting” the average family size of our grandchildren, but I would “predict” that it will not surpass 2.0 births per woman!*



# A PERSONAL EPILOGUE

*Readers may recall that in my first “Personal Experiences” I stated that I am a liberal Democrat. I have been one my entire adult life. Why did I make this seemingly unrelated statement (to the topic itself) at the end of chapter 1? The reason is quite simple: the issue of changing racial/ethnic composition has been coopted by conservatives and even far-right racists. It has not been easy for a true liberal (especially on racial matters) to find himself identified with the Patrick Buchanans and David Dukes of this world. On the other hand, it is extremely discouraging to note that so few liberals are willing to take what they perceive to be a politically incorrect position, when it comes to this controversial issue.*

*It took some time for me to arrive at my own conclusions on population composition. Originally, I was clearly on the “other side.” Perhaps the first reason for switching was (and remains) my complete commitment to the civil rights of our minorities—especially African Americans. In my view, continued high levels of immigration (including earlier immigrants) after the Civil War and at the time of the American entrepreneurs preferred to Blacks from the South. Today unfortunately, few Black leaders are hurting minorities much more than anyone else. On the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American entrepreneurs preferred to hire immigrants rather than the situation is being repeated. Leaders have spoken out on this topic—perhaps for fear of being called racist themselves. I am more concerned with helping our own minorities, many of whom have been in this country far longer than their White counterparts, than in seeing our nation become more heterogeneous. On this particular issue, while it may seem that I am on the same side as certain right-wing reactionaries, it is for much different reasons. I am totally committed to helping our own minorities make it in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

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**“We are a great nation;  
we can be greater.”**

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*A second, and equally important, reason for my views is population growth. I find it interesting that very few of the far right who denounce immigration cite overpopulation as a reason for their opinions. After reading this monograph, readers should be quite aware of my feelings on the nation’s population size. Growth must come to an end and the data are clear: the only sure way to achieve that goal is to greatly reduce immigration. On this issue, I see no liberal-conservative dimension. Advocates of growth are found on both sides of the issue, as are advocates of no-growth. Unfortunately, the latter seem to limit their “solutions” to fertility, and seldom is immigration mentioned.*

*A final reason for my opinions on population change in the United States tends to be somewhat more amorphous than the first two. Despite claims by some from the right, liberals can be as patriotic as conservatives. We simply are less opposed to change. I, for one, yield to no one in my love of country. Patriotism is not the exclusive domain of conservatives; there is room for all of us. Thus, while I believe that immigration levels should be reduced, I also believe that all Americans, regardless of background, should and must be treated equally. We are a great nation; we can be greater. That is my fondest hope for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

## Endnotes

1. In this report, I distinguish between the following groups: Non-Hispanic White, African American, Hispanic, and Asian and Pacific Islanders. Since their numbers are small, Native Americans will generally be included with Asian and Pacific Islanders. Hispanics can be of different races. Thus calling these “racial” categories is technically incorrect—“racial/ethnic” is more appropriate. To simplify matters, I will occasionally use Whites to represent Non-Hispanic Whites and Asians to includes “Others.”
2. Until the 1960s, some 80 percent of immigrants came from either Europe, Canada, or Oceania. With the legislative changes in 1965, the proportions reversed. Today, some 80 percent of immigrants come from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Only 20 percent come from Europe or Canada.
3. Peter Morrison, *Forecasting Population of Small Areas: An Overview* (Santa Barbara: Rand Corp., 1977), 12.
4. Ed Lytwak, *A Tale of Two Futures: Changing Shares of U.S. Population Growth* (Washington, D.C.: NPG Forum, Negative Population Growth, 1999), 6.
5. Jennifer Cheeseman Day, *Population Projections of the United States by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1995–2050*, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, P–25–1130 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).
6. The total fertility rate indicates the number of live births a woman would have if she had her births according to the age-specific rates of a given year.
7. Newly published data for 1997 from NCHS indicate the following total fertility rates: Non-Hispanic Whites—1.8; Non-Hispanic Blacks—2.2; American Indian—2.0; Asian—1.9; Hispanic—3.0 (3.3 for Mexican Americans).
8. See, for example, Lindsey Grant, *Juggernaut* (Santa Ana: Seven Locks Press, 1998).
9. This section is an updated and reedited version of a previous paper by the author, “Quality of Life: What the Latest Census Bureau Projections Mean for America” (Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies, May 1996).
10. “U.S. Schools Lagging, Business Leaders Warn,” *Washington Post*, 27 March 1996. In a June 1999 hearing in Washington, Gerstner once again warned about the problems in American schools, especially regarding technology.
11. “Not Ready for CSU,” *San Jose News-Mercury*, 25 January 1996.
12. William A.V. Clark, *California Cauldron* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 50.
13. Anjetta McQueen, “School Enrollment at Record High,” Associated Press, 19 August 1999.
14. These and many other statistics that follow are derived from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1995–96* and from more recent information on the Census Bureau’s Internet web page: <http://census.gov.com>.
15. U.S. Census Bureau Internet web page: <http://census.gov.com> .
16. “One Size Fits All Won’t Control Urban Sprawl,” *USA Today*, 12 May 1999, 12.
17. Steve Pardo, “Growth’s Dark Side Emerging: Canton Hit by Three Robberies in Three Days; Cops Cite Burgeoning Population as Factor,” *Detroit News*, 14 June 1999.
18. These data from the U.S. Bureau of Justice do not include persons serving less than a year, usually in city or county jails.
19. Environmental Protection Agency, *National Priorities List Fact Book* (Feb. 1991).

20. Leon Bouvier and Lindsey Grant, *How Many Americans: Population, Immigration, and the Environment* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994), 15–16.
21. Bouvier and Grant, *How Many Americans*, 17.
22. Bernard Gavzer, “Take out the Trash and Put it Where?” *Parade*, 13 June 1999, 4.
23. Bouvier and Grant, *How Many Americans*, 15.
24. M. Falkenmark and Carl Widstrand, “Population and Water Resources: A Delicate Balance,” *Population Bulletin* 47, no. 3 (November 1992): 13.
25. Water has been a prized commodity for thousands of years. For example, see *Genesis 13:10* where Lot chose the plain of Jordan, seeing that it was well-watered everywhere.
26. This, of course, is not the case for states with less than 600,000 population.
27. In 1789, 12 proposed Articles of Amendment to the Constitution were submitted to the states. Of these, proposed Articles I and II were not ratified. Proposed Article I read as follows:

After the first enumeration required by the first article of the Constitution, there shall be one Representative for every thirty thousand, until the number shall amount to one hundred, after which the proportion shall be so regulated by Congress, that there shall be not less than one hundred Representatives, nor less than one Representative for every forty thousand persons, until the number of Representatives shall amount to two hundred; after which the proportion shall be regulated by Congress, that there shall not be less than two hundred Representatives, nor more than one Representative for every fifty thousand persons.

Should this Article have been accepted, we would now have about 5,500 members of Congress!
28. For an interesting article on the dilution of democracy, see M. Boyd Wilcox, “Population Growth Dilutes Our Nation’s Democracy,” *Social Contract* (Summer 1999): 1–2.
29. Philip Longman, “We’re in the Tax Revolt Zone,” *Florida Trend* (October 1992): 18.
30. Virginia Ellis and Jeffrey L. Rabin, “CA’s Transit Needs \$100 Billion in Next Decade,” *Los Angeles Times*, 6 May 1999.
31. “Area Roads in Trouble, Leaders Say,” *Virginian-Pilot*, 17 May 1999, B1.
32. Roper-Starch Organization, “Attitudes Toward U.S. Population Size and Growth,” March 1996.
33. David Firestone, “Georgia Setting Up Tough Anti-sprawl Agency,” *New York Times*, 25 March 1999.
34. Roger K. Lewis, “Intelligent Growth and Design Helped the ‘City of Roses’ to Blossom,” *Washington Post*, 7 August 1999.
35. Jerry Busch, “Will City Shut off Growth?” *San Jose Mercury-News*, 2 April 1999.
36. “One Size Fits All,” 12.
37. Justin Blum, “10-Year County Forecast: \$1.1 Billion in Projects,” *Washington Post*, 20 May 1999.
38. Cited in Terry Neal, “Gore Seeks to Tap Voter Concern on ‘Livability’ Issues,” *Washington Post*, 5 May 1999.
39. Peter G. Peterson, *Gray Dawn: How the Coming Age Wave Will Transform America—and the World* (New York: Times Books, 1999).

40. "Echoes" of the baby boom will continue for a much longer period, but will gradually diminish in intensity.
41. Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Birth Dearth* (New York: Pharos Books, 1989); Julian Simon, "Getting the Immigrants We Need," *Washington Post*, 3 August 1988.
42. Katharine Betts, *The Great Divide* (Sydney: Duffy and Snellgrove, 1999), 63.
43. Laurent Belsie, "America's New Not-melting Pot," *Social Contract* (Spring 1999), 182.
44. Ibid., 183. Based in William Frey's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data 1990–1997.
45. See, for example, Peter Brimelow, *Alien Nation* (New York: Random House, 1995); Leon F. Bouvier, *Peaceful Invasions* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992); William A.V. Clark, *The California Cauldron* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998).
46. In FY 1997, legal permanent residence was granted to 660,477 foreigners—a 17-percent decrease from 1997. However, according to Michelle Mitteistadt (Associated Press, 12 August 1999),  

the decrease wasn't a reflection of reduced demand. Rather, it was a sign of the agency's continued difficulty in dealing with a rising backlog of applications. INS estimated that it would have granted legal permanent residence to as many as 140,000 additional people last year had it been able to keep pace with its caseload. The backlog currently stands at 890,000—a sharp increase from the backlog of 121,000 applications in fiscal 1994.
47. Dane Schiller, "Border Town Conducts Business Only in Spanish," Fort Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel*, 11 August 1999.
48. Note that differences exist in the definition of "active" and "dependent" populations. Some use 15 as the separating point, others use 18.
49. Randolph S. Bourne, "Trans-National America," *Atlantic Monthly* (July 1916): 118.
50. Horace M. Kallen, *Culture and Democracy in the United States* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924).
51. Richard D. Alba, *Italian-Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1985), 6.
52. Stanley Lieberson, "Unhyphenated Whites in the United States," in Richard Alba (ed.), *Ethnicity and Race in the United States: Toward the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 179.
53. Stephan Thernstrom, "Comment," *Journal of American Ethnic History* (1985): 77–8.
54. Thomas J. Archdeacon, "Melting Pot or Cultural Pluralism? Changing Views on American Ethnicity," *Revue europeene des migrations internationales* 6, no. 1 (1990): 18.
55. Clark, *California Cauldron*, 13.
56. John Isbister, "Is America Too White?" in *What Then Is This American, This New Man?* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies, 1998), 29.
57. Clark, *California Cauldron*, 13.
58. Nathan Glazer, "Is Assimilation Dead?" *Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Science* (1993): 122–36.
59. Clark, *California Cauldron*, 13.
60. This section is based on Leon Bouvier, *Peaceful Invasions: Immigration and Changing America* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies, 1991), ch.10.

61. Clark, *California Cauldron*, 14.
62. T.S. Eliot. *Notes Toward the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949), 49.
63. John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000: Ten New Directions for the 1990s* (New York: William Morrow, 1990), 120.
64. Nathan Glazer, "Is There an American People," in *What Then Is This American?*, 12.
65. Kevin McCarthy and David F. Ronfelt, *U.S. Immigration Policy and Global Interdependence* (Santa Monica: Rand Corp., 1982), 16.
66. Changes may well be more startling at local as well as state levels. People live in neighborhoods, not in nations.
67. "Blended Races Making a True Melting Pot," *USA Today*, 7 September 1999, 1, citing a study by demographers Barry Edmonston and Jeffrey Passel.
68. Isbister, "Is America Too White?" 28.
69. As noted earlier, "wave" is the correct description of earlier immigration movements. Technically, the current movement, which began in the late 1960s is still not a "wave," since it shows no signs of receding.